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SRH look to continue winning run against KKR

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SC bins TMC's plea on central workers

Says it's within law if EC uses central workers for poll counting

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Supreme Court on Saturday declined to issue further directions on a plea by TMC) challenging the Election Commission's decision to deploy central government personnel during vote counting in West Bengal, effectively upholding the poll panel's framework.

A special bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi held that the EC's 13 April circular, providing for a mix of central and state government employees for counting on 4 May, was not contrary to law. The court said the commission has discretion to appoint personnel from either pool.

The court did not issue fresh directions but formally recorded the Election Commission's assurance that the circular would be implemented "in true letter and spirit", including the presence of state government nominees alongside central staff. The bench observed that if the TMC was seeking compliance with the circular, it effectively aligned with the EC's stated position.

"No further orders are necessary," the bench said, dismissing the petition.

The TMC had approached the top court after the Calcutta High Court, in an April 30 ruling, rejected its challenge, finding no illegality in the EC directive and noting multiple layers of oversight in the counting process.

During the hearing, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the TMC, argued that the April 13 circular was communicated only on April 29 and raised concerns over alleged apprehensions of irregularities cited by the EC. He said the party's primary demand was that state government nominees be included as provided in the circular. The bench remarked that if compliance with the circular was being sought, there was little reason to fault the EC, as the framework already permitted such inclusion.

Counsel for the EC, DS Naidu, said the returning officer, who is a state government official, retains overarching authority and assured the court that state personnel would be part of the counting process. He dismissed the TMC's concerns as misplaced, noting that candidates' counting agents would also be present. The court disposed of the plea, reiterating that the EC would adhere fully to its directive. —*PTI*

Security personnel stand guard as BJP candidate from Jorasanko constituency, Vijay Ojha arrives outside a strong room, ahead of the counting of votes in Kolkata on Saturday —*PTI*

COMPLAINS TO EC

TMC flags unauthorised sorting of postal ballot

KOLKATA, 2 MAY

TMC on Saturday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission, alleging unauthorised sorting of postal ballot covers at an EVM strongroom in Kolkata, triggering protests and political tensions.

TMC workers, stationed outside the Khudiram Anushilan Kendra, claimed that eight trunks of postal ballots were brought in around 4 am and taken to a room without CCTV coverage. The party questioned the lack of surveillance, stating that all areas handling EVMs and postal ballots should be under strict monitoring.

As protests intensified, BJP's Shyampukur candidate Purnima Chakraborty arrived at the spot with supporters, leading to slogan shouting by both sides. Police intervened to maintain order. Chakraborty accused the TMC of creating unrest out of fear of defeat.

The TMC later confirmed it had formally approached the EC over the matter.

Similar protests were reported at Barasat Government College in North 24 Parganas, where TMC workers alleged that CCTV cameras were switched off for 17 minutes. Party candidate Narayan Goswami demanded access to the premises. Election officials, however, said the cameras were functional and attributed the issue to a snapped power cable, adding that the footage would be shared with concerned parties.

In Purba Bardhaman, the BJP circulated a video purportedly showing a person scaling the walls of a strongroom facility. The EC dismissed the claim, stating the footage was old and the individual was involved in installing CCTV systems and air-conditioning units.

The developments have heightened tensions ahead of counting. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

13 kids get rashes after drinking water in R'than school

JAIPUR, 2 MAY

Thirteen students from a government school in Rajasthan's Barmer district were hospitalised after falling ill upon drinking water on Saturday. The incident happened at Government Senior Secondary School in Meghwalon ki Basti, Sanawada, during an activity. Several students drank water from the school tank during recess and soon complained of itching and red rashes. They were initially taken to a local hospital in Sanawada and later referred to Barmer Medical College's district hospital when their condition did not improve. Additional District Collector Rajendra Singh said the children presented allergy-like symptoms and are under medical supervision. He added, "All the children are currently out of danger and the exact cause of the illness is being investigated," —*PTI*

4-year-old girl raped, murdered in Pune

PUNE, 2 MAY

A 65-year-old man with criminal record has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting and murdering a four-year-old girl in Bhor tehsil of Pune district, police said on Saturday, as the incident led to angry protests in the area. The accused, who works as a labourer, allegedly lured the girl with the promise of food on Friday and took her to a cattle enclosure where he sexually assaulted her and later killed her by hitting her with a stone, said a police official. He was arrested on the basis of CCTV footage from a private residence which captured him with the child. A case was registered against him under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.—*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 4

30-year-old Delhi judge found dead at Safdarjung

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

In what appears to be a case of suspected suicide, a 30-year-old judge was found dead at his home in Delhi's Safdarjung. The deceased Aman Kumar Sharma, son of Prem Kumar Sharma, was found dead at his residence in south Delhi. The police suspected suicide after his body was found inside the bathroom of his Green Park home. Sharma was working as Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in North-East Delhi at Karkardooma Court. Delhi police sources said, a PCR call about the incident was received at Safdarjung Enclave police station at around 1.45 pm on Saturday from the deceased brother-in-law Shivam. —*AGENCIES*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Prices will rise if no GST cut on LPGs: K'taka hotels

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

- The demand has come in the wake of the price of commercial LPG being hiked by the steepest ever Rs 993 per 19-kg cylinder on Friday.

The Karnataka State Hotels Association (KSHA) on Saturday urged the government to immediately reduce the GST on 19 kg commercial LPG cylinders from 18 per cent to 5 per cent.

The demand has come in the wake of the price of commercial LPG being hiked by the steepest ever Rs 993 per 19-kg cylinder on Friday, marking the third straight monthly increase due to rising global energy prices linked to the West Asia conflict.

G K Shetty, President of the Association, in a statement, said the hike of Rs 1,308 in 60 days announced by the government (via oil marketing companies) is the sharpest increase in recent times.

Prices have risen from the roughly Rs 1,800 - Rs 2,000 range in March to Rs 3,100 plus now, he said, with the total increase ranging from 50 per cent to 70 per cent within 60 days, depending on the base city and timing.

"If immediate corrective measures are not taken, businesses will have no option but to pass on the increased costs to consumers, making eating out more expensive and affecting overall demand," he said.

The shortage of commercial LPG, coupled with steep price increases, has significantly escalated operational costs for hotels and eateries across the state, he said adding that the hotel and restaurant industry faced an unprecedented crisis triggered by global disruptions, including the ongoing war, which has severely impacted supply chains.

The Association has emphasised that reducing GST on commercial LPG is a critical step to contain the cascading effect of rising costs across the value chain. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Youth Congress protests against the Central government for hiking Commercial LPG price at Freedom park in Bengaluru on Saturday —*SALAR*

Cong MLA Vinay disqualified after murder conviction

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

The Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Saturday issued an official notification regarding the disqualification of Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni following his conviction in the murder case of BJP leader Yogeshgouda Goudar.

The former minister is currently in prison, serving life imprisonment in the case.

'Consequent upon the conviction of Vinay Kulkarni, Member of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly representing the Dharwad constituency, by the LXXXI Additional City Civil & Sessions Judge, Bengaluru City (CCH-82), in Spl CC No. 565/2021, he stands disqualified from the membership of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly from the date of conviction, i.e, April 15, 2026,' the notification read.

Hence, one seat in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly has fallen vacant, the notification said.

On 15 April, Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat convicted Kulkarni and others under various IPC sections, including criminal conspiracy and murder. Subsequently, on 17 April, the court sentenced Kulkarni and 15 others convicted in the case to life imprisonment. The case pertains to the killing of Goudar, a BJP Zilla Panchayat member, in Dharwad on June 15, 2016. Kulkarni was a minister at that time. Hired assailants attacked and hacked Goudar to death in his gym at Saptapur in Dharwad. —*PTI*

GOVT ALLOWS 100% FDI IN INSURANCE SECTOR, AMENDS FEMA RULES

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

- While 100 per cent foreign investment will be allowed in insurance companies and intermediaries.

The Finance Ministry on Saturday notified 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector under the automatic route.

While 100 per cent foreign investment will be allowed in insurance companies and intermediaries, including brokers, under the automatic route, the cap is 20 per cent for Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), said the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) (Second Amendment) Rules, 2026.

The Parliament had passed the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (amendment of insurance laws) Bill, 2025, in December, 2025, paving the way for hiking the FDI cap in the insurance sector to 100 per cent under the automatic route, from 74 per cent earlier.

Subsequently, after the President's assent, the Bill became law.

Thereafter in February, 2026, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Commerce and Industry Ministry had notified 100 per cent FDI in the insurance sector. —*PTI*

PM's 'charisma', RSS to feature in Gujarat sociology textbooks

PM Narendra Modi —*PTI*

VADODARA, 2 MAY

Maharaja Sayajirao University in Gujarat's Vadodara has introduced "Modi Tattva", a module on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "charismatic leadership" and the history of the RSS into its Sociology syllabus to study their impact on society, an official said on Saturday.

The new course titled "Sociology of Patriotism" in its two-year Master's in Sociology programme, which analyses "Modi Tattva" and the works of social reformers like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Sayajirao Gaekwad III, said Dr Virendra Singh, who heads the sociology department.

He said Modi's long-term presence in politics makes him essential to study, arguing that—like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr — he exemplifies Weber's concept of charismatic leadership, a subject for scientific inquiry.

Singh, said "Modi Tattva" would also cover topics such as media and digital nationalism, citizenship and dissent, and globalisation and identity politics — all part of the syllabus. He said that the papers will also cover units on understanding nationalism, the nation-state, and cultural nationalism with a global perspective, and on pioneers who have worked on social reforms, including Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, the erstwhile ruler of Baroda, and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the first person to talk about Hindu Swaraj. —*PTI*

'NO NEED TO PANIC'

Phones beep across India as govts tests disaster alert system

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Mobile phones across the country went abuzz after Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia launched the cell broadcast alert system on Saturday, which will warn citizens of emergencies and natural disasters. The Department of Telecom had earlier alerted citizens about the trial run of the service from 29 April to avoid panic.

The test message read: "Extremely Severe Alert. India launched Cell Broadcast using indigenous technology, for instant disaster alerting service for its citizens. Alert citizens, safe nation. No action is required by the public upon receipt of this message - Government of India". The alert was sent across all telecom networks nationwide, except in poll-bound states.

"Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya Scindia, today launched the Cell Broadcast Alert System, developed indigenously by C-DOT in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah," an official statement said.

Through this system, critical information related to disasters, emergencies, and public safety will be transmitted directly and instantly to citizens' mobile phones, the statement said.

Based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) recommended by the International Telecommunication Union , the system is operational across all 36 states and union territories and delivers disaster and emergency alerts via SMS to mobile users in geo-targeted areas.

Cell Broadcast technology has been introduced alongside SMS, enabling alerts to be transmitted to all mobile devices within a defined geographic area simultaneously, ensuring near-real-time delivery. —*PTI*

— PTI

Dakshina Kannada: 2 held with Rs 2.38L fake notes

MANGALURU, 2 MAY

Two men were arrested in Dakshina Kannada district and counterfeit currency worth Rs 2.38 lakh was seized, police said on Saturday. The accused were identified as Mohammad Sameer (28) and Mohammad Irfan (26). The arrests were made in Bantwal taluk following a targeted operation based on specific inputs about fake currency circulation. Police said the duo were allegedly found in possession of forged notes, mainly in higher denominations, which they were attempting to circulate in the region. Officers also recovered three mobile phones and a car believed to have been used in the operation. Preliminary reports suggest links to a wider network. Cops are probing the source of the notes and interstate connections. —*PTI*

BSY's convention in Chitradurga is apolitical, says son

MYSURU, 2 MAY

State BJP President BY Vijayendra on Saturday said that BSY Abhimanotsava — a mega convention organised by fans and supporters of former chief minister BS Yediyurappa to mark his 50 years in public life in Chitradurga on 9 May — is an apolitical function. Speaking to reporters in Mysuru on Saturday, he said the convention was organised to highlight the life, struggles, achievements and contributions of his father and not for political gain. BS Yediyurappa spent nearly 50 years building the BJP, taking part in farmers' movements and helping bring the party to power for the first time in the State, he said. —*SALAR NEWS*

Mysuru ranked second in 'Sakala' implementation

MYSURU, 2 MAY

Mysuru district has secured second place in the State for disposal of 'Sakala' applications in April, Deputy Commissioner Laxmikanth said in a release on Saturday. The district administration has received 1,19,801 applications from the public during the month of April. It rejected 9,937 applications. Officials disposed of 98.37 per cent of applications in April. Applications were to be disposed of within three days to one month. Revenue and other departments performed particularly well. Districts are ranked on four parameters: early disposal of online applications, disposal of overdue applications, rejection rates, and applications received per lakh of population.—*SALAR NEWS*

Ensure water supply: CM forecasts rainfall dip

Says officials responsible if there's water shortage, flays them for not fulfilling Budget vows

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said there is a possibility of a five per cent decrease in rainfall this year and asked officials to ensure that drinking water supply is not affected.

"District in-charge secretaries should constantly monitor the drinking water situation in their districts. Meetings should be held with Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officers in this regard," Siddaramaiah said at a meeting of Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, and Secretaries of all departments held at Vidhana Soudha.

"It is the responsibility of the respective secretaries to resolve the problems. Drinking water supply should not be affected for any reason," he said, according to a statement.

Pointing out that BR Ambedkar had warned against officials appeasing politicians, as it could lead to dictatorship, the CM asked officials to work within the framework of the law. "Give suggestions to ministers within the scope of the law," he added.

The CM also noted that 15 announcements from last year's budget are yet to be implemented.

The government made a total of 565 announcements in this year's budget, including 218 new ones, he said, adding, "It is the responsibility of officials to implement all budget announcements within the same year. They should not remain unimplemented for any reason. Bring any practical difficulties in implementation directly to my notice or that of the chief secretary."

Out of the announcements in the 2026-27 budget, government orders have been issued for only five, he said.

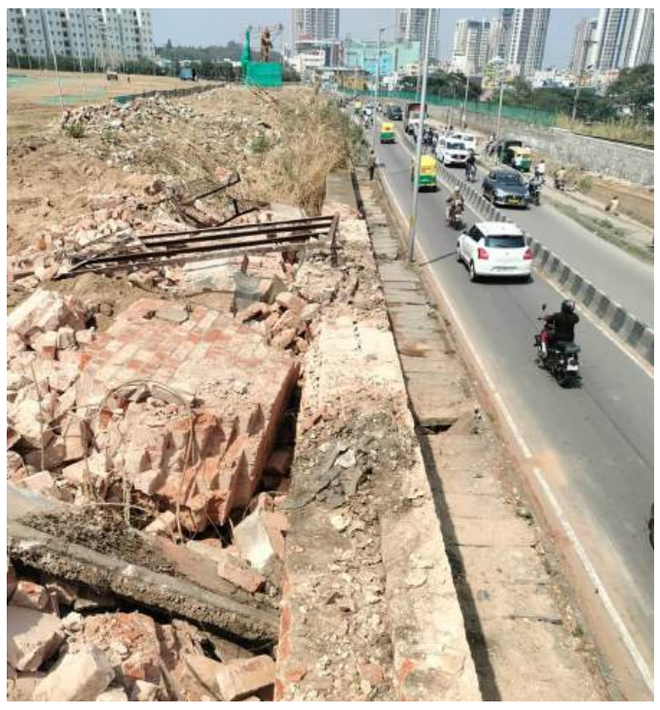
RECRUITMENT WOES

Siddaramaiah said the Finance Department has approved the filling of 24,300 posts.

"There are 32,132 posts pending in cadres related to Kalyana Karnataka, and the recruitment process has not yet begun. The revision of cadre and recruitment rules is pending in some departments and should be completed at the earliest," he stressed.

The Chief Minister also launched the new "Karnataka Progress Portal" and a handbook related to monitoring schemes, approvals, and inter-departmental coordination. —*PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday told a meeting at Vidhana Soudha on Saturday that rainfall is likely to decrease by 5 per cent this year; a farmer with a pair of cows walks in the rain near Chikkamagaluru —*X@SIDDARAMAIAH/PTI*



GBA officials demolished a dilapidated compound wall at Binny Mill, in Bengaluru, on Saturday —*X @GBA_OFFICE*

GBA to remove old structures after Bowring tragedy

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has instructed officials to immediately identify and remove compound walls and buildings in a dilapidated condition that pose a risk of collapse within its jurisdiction.

The instructions were issued following directions from Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru City Development Minister DK Shivakumar, in the wake of destruction caused by heavy rains, strong winds, and a hailstorm that lashed the City on Wednesday evening. At least 10 people died, including seven in a compound wall collapse at Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital.

Calling the collapse an "unfortunate incident", the Greater Bengaluru Authority said in a release that there remains a continued risk of trees and branches falling in several areas.

Therefore, Shivakumar has directed authorities to immediately identify hazardous trees, weak branches, dangerous walls, and unsafe buildings, and to take preventive measures to avoid any untoward incidents and inconvenience to the public, it said.

Rao and Additional Commissioners of all five city corporations have been instructed to personally monitor the situation and form special teams comprising Fire and Emergency Services personnel, police staff, and City corporation officials and employees.

The GBA said that on Binnymill Road under the Central City Corporation, an old wall was found to be in a severely weakened condition and at imminent risk of collapse.

A part of the wall had already collapsed in recent rains. The removal of the remaining portion of the wall is underway. In the West City Corporation limits, at 8th Main Road, Mysore Lamps premises in Malleswaram, a 240-meter-long compound wall was identified as structurally unsafe. With appropriate safety measures, manpower, and machinery, the demolition of the wall has been completed. —*PTI*

Man held for blackmailing woman with pics

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

A 46-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly blackmailing a woman using her explicit photos and videos to force her into a sexual relationship with him, police said on Saturday. The accused, Haniyur Chandregowda, is a member of the Child Welfare Committee in Ramanagara.

A 43-year-old makeup artist filed a complaint Thursday at the Rajarajeshwari Nagar police station against Chandregowda. According to the FIR, the pair met in 2021 when Chandregowda claimed he had TV industry connections and offered her work.

The woman, who has lived apart from her husband for eight years, alleged that Chandregowda began visiting her frequently. He promised marriage to initiate a physical relationship.

Police stated that Chandregowda later used private, intimate photos and videos to blackmail the victim, forcing her to continue the relationship under the threat of making the footage public. Obscene photos of several other women were also found on his mobile phone during the investigation, police said. —*PTI*

FIR filed against 9 for social boycott of Kuruba family

BELAGAVI, 2 MAY

The police have registered a case against nine people in connection with the alleged social boycott of a Kuruba family in the Kondasakoppa village of Belagavi district.

According to the complaint of victim family member Renuka Sambrekar the family of Narasoba Kareppa Sambrekara was ostracised by members of the community over temple rituals and personal disputes. Based on the complaint filed on 6 April an FIR has been lodged at the Hirebagewadi police station.

The accused are Mallappa Sambrekara, Vitthal, Bagnya Ramesh, Malinga, and others.

Police said they have intensified the investigation and are taking steps to ensure protection for the affected family while initiating legal action against those named in the complaint.

However, the incident may not involve the entire family. It is claimed that the boycott was directed at a single individual, reportedly with the consent of his own family.

The individual had frequent disputes with villagers. Acting on the advice of family members, villagers are believed to have taken the decision to distance him from the community.

Meanwhile, seven families from a village in Bagalkot district have been socially boycotted for not paying money to celebrate jatre (deity festival).

The pancha committee (village elders' committee) of Hunasikatti village in Jamakhandi taluk banished the families from the village as they failed to contribute for the fair.

The "punishment" was handed down because the families failed to contribute Rs 600 for the Hanumanta Devara Jatre. — *Salar News*

Religious segregation: Tejasvi on Rs 500 cr for minority colonies

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

BJP's Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya on Saturday accused the Karnataka government of trying to "institutionalise religious segregation" through the recently approved Rs 600 crore action plan for the development of 'minority colonies'.

"Under which constitutional provision can public money be earmarked exclusively for 'minority colonies' based on religion rather than for all poor and deprived localities based on objective socio-economic criteria?" Surya wrote on X.

The BJP MP has questioned the constitutional validity of the action plan, saying that it could contradict Article 14 and Article 15 of the Constitution while guaranteeing equality before the law and prohibiting discrimination by the state on grounds of religion.

"How does a Rs 600 crore religion-linked package comply with Article 14 and Article 15 of the Constitution, which guarantee equality before law and prohibit discrimination by the State on grounds of religion?" he further asked.

The BJP MP also asked the State government that if the real objective is development of backward areas, why are equally poor Hindu, Dalit, SC/ST, OBC and other underdeveloped colonies not covered under the same framework instead of creating a religion-specific scheme. —*PTI*

Govt on alert after H5N1 kills 41 peacocks

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

After 44 peacocks died of the H5N1 virus in Tumakuru district, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Saturday directed officials to implement strict precautionary measures to prevent its spread across forest areas, including zoos, bird sanctuaries, Magadi Lake, and the community reserve at Kokkare Bellur.

The directive comes after laboratory reports from the ICAR–National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal confirmed H5N1 avian influenza as the cause of the deaths. The peacocks died between 16 and 21 April.

Khandre also directed that any deaths of birds, whether migratory or local, must be reported immediately, and that samples from carcasses should be collected and sent for testing.

If required, a nodal officer may be appointed to monitor the situation across the State, he added.

Authorities have established an infected zone within a 0–3 km radius and a surveillance zone extending from 3 to 10 km.

Surveillance for fever, Influenza-Like Illness and Severe Acute Respiratory Infection will be carried out over the next 10 days, covering a population of 20,432 across 38 villages, the Health Department said.

It also advised PPE use, thoroughly cooking poultry and eggs, and avoiding contact with symptomatic individuals.

Avian influenza H5N1 is a subtype of the influenza virus that infects birds and mammals, including humans in rare instances, according to the World Health Organisation. —*PTI*

'IRANIANS LIVING NORMALY'

No war, no peace: Iran envoy on ceasfire

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Iran's envoy to India Abdul Majeed Hakeem Ilahi on Saturday characterised the ongoing tensions between his country and the Israel-US alliance as a state of "no war, no peace".

Addressing a press conference in the City, he said the global stability hinges on those who initiated the war and questioned why countries affected by the war and suffering from the energy crisis are not pressuring the US and Israel to stop the aggression

"Iran didn't want this war, but Iran was forced by the war and several times Iran tried to avoid this war... I don't know what is the condition of these people and these countries (US-Israel)... they want to impose on other countries what they want, and who gave them this authority?" he asked, noting that factories and hotels were closing across the world due to the war.

He noted that the attacks disrupted the progress being made during negotiations in Oman and then Geneva.

Despite losses of over 4,000 people, including the deaths of 175 people in a primary school, he said Iran resisted calls for "unconditional surrender".

"Iran said, 'Okay, we are ready to be sacrificed,' but we are not ready to submit ourselves," he added.

On the situation in Iran, e said conditions are stable and people are going about their daily lives. "They are working ....(leading) their ordinary life. They're going farming and they do everything....and they aren't scared of anything. And they are ready to defend themselves." —*PTI*

Iranian envoy Abdul Majid Hakeem Ilahi, in the City, on Saturday —*PTI*

> **Is it acceptable and reasonable that one country orders all countries -- you should not deal with this country, You should not purchase from this country. You should not have business with this country. You should not buy from this country**
>
> -Abdul Majeed Hakeem Ilahi, Supreme Leader's representative to India

Twin tragedy at KRS: Elderly couple drowns, youth missing

MANDYA, 2 MAY

Two separate boating incidents within hours of each other at the backwaters of the KRS Dam near Giriyarahalli have left an elderly couple dead and a young man missing.

On Friday evening, Bengaluru residents Manjunath, 72, and his wife Jessie, 70, died after their sailing training boat capsized. Police stated the couple was in the backwaters with their daughter, son-in-law, and grandson when sudden strong winds and rain overturned the vessel. The couple was wearing life jackets. Rescue teams saved the family members.

Meanwhile, Madhu, 26, a resident of Giriyarahalli village in Pandavapura taluk, went missing after his fishing boat overturned due to sudden strong winds. —*Salar News*

'DKS' CM aspiration is natural, good luck to him'

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Saturday that it was natural for Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to aspire to become the Chief Minister, but added that the final decision rests with the High Command.

Parameshwara told press that he wished Shivakumar "good luck".

"I have always wished him so. We are good friends. He is the KPCC (Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee) President, and naturally, he has an aspiration to become the Chief Minister. Nobody can object to it," Parameshwara said in response to a question.

Simultaneously, he told reporters, "don't always go back to the CM issue. Please understand there is nothing that I can tell you about it."

The remarks come a day after Shivakumar said that the High Command's word was like "prasada" as AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge said that there won't be a change in CM "for now".

Meanwhile, Parameshwara met senior Congress leader and MLC BK Hariprasad and Minister B ZZameer Ahmed Khan over dinner on Friday. Hariprasad had met Siddaramaiah earlier in the day. Responding to a question about it, as his name is also being mentioned for the chief minister post amid calls for a "Dalit CM", Parameshwara said there was no discussion about the CM issue. —*PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

UP Congress Chief hospitalised after fainting

LUCKNOW, 2 MAY

Uttar Pradesh Congress President Ajay Rai was admitted to Medanta Hospital in Lucknow after he fainted due to low sodium levels, party officials said. Anshu Awasthi, UP Congress spokesperson, stated Rai was hospitalised around 6pm on Friday after losing consciousness at his residence, despite engaging in party activities earlier. Avinash Pande, in-charge of UP, assured Rai is now stable. Dr Rakesh Kapoor of Medanta confirmed that Rai collapsed at home and was treated for sodium deficiency and high blood pressure. He is now significantly better and conversing with others. Rahul Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern and wishes for Rai's speedy recovery via X. *—PTI*

Kavitha: No issue if states lose seats in delimitation

HYDERABAD, 2 MAY

K Kavitha, founder of Telangana Rakshana Sena, proposed that the Rajya Sabha be reformed with powers akin to the United States Senate, to influence legislation affecting states. She said the Centre should use a fixed population as the benchmark for seat allocation, even if some states lose representation. Such losses could be offset by giving all states an equal number of Rajya Sabha seats, regardless of size. During a "meet the press" programme, she clarified her criticism of K Chandrasekhar Rao was political, not personal. Kavitha explained that the Rajya Sabha should have powers similar to the US Senate, requiring bills to be approved before passage, thus ensuring the political and financial security of states. *—PTI*

Man held in Kutch for 'promoting' ISIS ideology

KUTCH, 2 MAY

Police in Gujarat's Kutch district arrested Fakirmamad Gagda, aged 32, for allegedly promoting ISIS ideology on social media. The resident of Bhuj was detained on Friday after police found multiple accounts on Instagram and Facebook created under different names, containing videos, writings, and images supporting terrorist activities. An official release from West Kutch-Bhuj SOG said Gagda followed ISIS's ideology and shared posts inciting Islamic jihad, posing a threat to India's sovereignty and unity. Mobile phones revealed his activity, and he was charged under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The authorities continue investigations into his online activities, aiming to prevent the spread of terror-promoting content *—PTI*

Manipur: Bodies of kids killed in bomb attack given to kin

IMPHAL, 2 MAY

The mortal remains of two children killed in a bomb attack in Manipur's Bishnupur district were handed over to their families on Saturday. The five-year-old boy and his six-month-old sister's bodies had been in the morgue for 25 days after families refused to accept them, demanding justice. Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh urged the families to accept the remains and assured efforts to find the perpetrators. The attack occurred on 7 April at Tronglaobi, leading to widespread protests across five valley districts. The case has since been transferred to the NIA. Hundreds gathered along the route to Tronglaobi to pay respects as the bodies were taken for last rites. *—PTI*

WB repolling sees protests, harassment

87% turnout recorded; Hundreds protest over 'threats' by TMC workers in South 24 Parganas

KOLKATA, 2 MAY

Over 87 per cent turnout was recorded till 5 pm in repolling across 15 booths in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Saturday, even as allegations of harassment and protests over threats of violence intensified.

Repolling, ordered by the Election Commission following reports of electoral malpractices, was largely peaceful in 11 booths in Magrahat Paschim and four in Diamond Harbour. Voter turnout stood at 86.11 per cent in Magrahat Paschim and 87.60 per cent in Diamond Harbour.

Tensions flared at booth number 179 in Diamond Harbour, where the Trinamool Congress (TMC) alleged that a specially abled voter and his mother were harassed and detained by central forces over alleged rule violations. The incident triggered protests by party workers and locals, with leaders reaching the spot. Poll officials said the issue was addressed.

Separately, hundreds of villagers staged a protest in Falta, blocking a road in Hasimnagar and alleging life threats from TMC workers ahead of vote counting. Many protesters, including women holding BJP flags, accused local panchayat pradhan Israfil, a close aide of TMC candidate Jehangir Khan, of warning of post-result violence.

CAPF personnel stand guard amid the protest by voters against TMC candidate Jahangir Khan in Falta on Saturday

A CRPF team visited the area with a large deployment and assured residents of security. An Election Commission official said a report has been sought from the district administration.

TMC leaders denied the allegations, calling the protest politically motivated. Khan said the demonstration was staged to target party workers and influence the situation before counting.

The BJP has earlier alleged widespread electoral malpractices in these constituencies, prompting the EC to deploy a special observer. A decision on repolling in Falta is awaited. *—PTI*

EC deploys additional observers for transparent vote counting

The Election Commission has deployed 165 additional counting observers and 77 police observers in West Bengal to ensure secure and transparent vote counting.

Counting observers have been assigned to constituencies with multiple halls, while police observers will oversee law and order but will not enter counting halls. The appointments have been made under Article 324 and the Representation of the People Act.

Strict access controls will be enforced, with entry allowed only through QR code-based ID cards issued via ECINet. Mobile phones are barred inside counting halls except for returning officers and counting observers. Form 17C-II will be prepared in the presence of counting agents and shared for signatures, while micro-observers will record results independently for cross-verification.

Kalighat OC suspended over post

Kalighat police station officer-in-charge Gautam Das has been suspended over an "objectionable" WhatsApp status ahead of West Bengal poll results, a senior Kolkata Police official said.

Das has been replaced by Chameli Mukhopadhyay. The action followed a TMC complaint to the Election Commission after party leader Joyprakash Majumdar shared a photo of Das in uniform holding a firearm with the caption "ready for new responsibility". The TMC alleged violation of service rules and social media norms, questioning the firearm's authorisation and calling the post threatening.

Never backed any Cong leader as CM: IUML

KOZHIKODE, 2 MAY

IUML leader MK Muneer said on Saturday said his party has not backed any Congress leader as chief ministerial candidate.

Speaking to a media house on IUML state president, Panakkad Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal's statement that Congress leader VD Satheesan had led the UDF in the Assembly election—which was interpreted by some as the ally's support for him as chief ministerial candidate—Muneer said the party had expressed no preference in the matter.

"Thangal said the decision has to be made by the Congress high command," Muneer said.

He said the Congress has capable leadership and a decision on the chief ministerial candidate could be taken without delay after the election results are announced on 4 May.

He said that attempts were being made to create fear around the IUML by promoting a narrative that a UDF government would be under its control.

"They claim that if IUML gets the Home portfolio, riots will happen. They claim that if the Education portfolio is given to IUML, only Muslim schools will get permissions. The government will be a shadow of Jamaat-e-Islami," he said.

ANVAR MEETS CPM REBEL

UDF Independent candidate PV Anvar and CPI(M) rebel leader V Kunhikrishnan met at the latter's residence in Payyanur here on Saturday.

Anvar, a former LDF MLA, left the front and contested the Assembly election as a UDF-backed Independent from Beypore in Kozhikode.

Kunhikrishnan, a former CPI(M) leader, was expelled from the party after raising corruption allegations against Payyanur sitting MLA TI Madhusoodanan. *— PTI*

Stalin huddles with alliance leaders

CHENNAI, 2 MAY

After meeting his party's senior leaders ahead of the Assembly poll counting on 4 May, Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin met DMK's alliance leaders on Friday and discussed victory prospects.

After his four-day vacation in Kodaikanal, Stalin met his party's senior leaders twice and discussed the ground situation.

Following this, the DMK chief met the state Congress committee president, K Selvaperunthagai and Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katchi (KMDK) General Secretary ER Eswaran at his party headquarters, Anna Arivalayam.

DMK sources said that Stalin also inquired about the preparations regarding the monitoring of counting in their constituencies. KMDK is contesting in two Assembly Constituencies with the DMK symbol.

Party Deputy General Secretary A Raja, Organising Secretary R S Bharathi and Communications Wing Head TKS Elangovan and Information Technology Wing Secretary TRB Raaja were present when Stalin met alliance leaders.

The DMK is contesting in 164 constituencies, and its ally Congress is competing in 28 seats.

The TN assembly elections were held on 23 April, and counting will take place on 4 May. *— PTI*

Vijay cancels trip to Velankanni church

Thousands of fans were disappointed as TVK leader Vijay cancelled his scheduled visit to Velankanni Church at Nagapattinam district on Saturday.

Soon after the 23 April TN Assembly election, the actor-turned politician was on a series of pilgrimages.

Similarly, Vijay had a plan to visit Velankani, a Christian pilgrimage centre known for the Basilica of Our Lady of Good

Health, on Saturday. Thousands of fans gathered in and around the Velankani church to have a glimpse of their star. *—PTI*

Anbumani bats for for cigarettes ban

PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss urged Prime Minister Modi to take legislative measures to prohibit smoking and the sale of cigarettes to individuals born on or after 1 January 2009, to create a smoking-free generation.

"I write to you with a deep sense of urgency, drawing your kind attention to a critical public health issue that continues to endanger the

lives of millions of Indians, particularly among the younger generation who are affected by smoking," he said. *—PTI*

DKS hints at 'hotel politics' ahead of results in Assam

GUWAHATI, 2 MAY

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Saturday that he was visiting Assam to "protect MLAs" from defection after the Assembly election results on 4 May.

DK Shivakumar told ANI in Guwahati, "I am here to protect our MLAs, guide them and help the party."

DK Shivakumar and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel arrived in Assam to meet Congress candidates.

DK Shivakumar is a known face in the Congress for hotel politics.

When asked about West Bengal and Assam polls, he said, "INDIA is going to form government in every state. Our cadres are confident that the Congress alliance will come to power. I believe in the voters of Assam." Echoing a similar view on the exit polls, Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel added, "Exit polls are a copy-paste of the one in December, and they never turn out to be correct."

In Assam, exit polls predicted that the BJP-led NDA is poised to retain power.

Congress senior observers DK Shivakumar, Bhupesh Baghel and Jitendra Singh interacted with the alliance partners on Saturday. Congress has stitched an alliance with the Raijor Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), CPI(M), APHLC, and CPI(ML). *— ANI*

Exit polls manipulated by BJP to mislead voters: Gogoi

GUWAHATI, 2 MAY

Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi on Saturday alleged that exit polls have been manipulated by the BJP to mislead voters, asserting that the opposition remains confident of victory.

Addressing a press conference after a meeting of opposition alliance leaders in Guwahati, Gogoi said voters, including women, had backed the opposition on issues such as price rise and governance, pointing to a "silent vote" and "undercurrent" not captured by surveys. He also alleged attempts by the BJP to create anomalies in strongrooms, claiming party workers and the public intervened to prevent irregularities.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar echoed the charge, calling exit polls misleading and expressing confidence that the opposition would form the government.

Gogoi further alleged that the BJP had approached opposition candidates after polling, indicating lack of confidence. *—PTI*

INDIA'S NEW ENVOY ARRIVES IN CHINA

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Punjab India's new Ambassador to China, Vikram Doraiswami, arrived in Shanghai on Saturday and is set to reach Beijing on Sunday to assume charge.

A 1992-batch IFS officer, Doraiswami succeeds Pradeep Kumar Rawat and was earlier High Commissioner to the UK. A Mandarin speaker, he has previously served in Hong Kong and Beijing. China welcomed his appointment. His posting comes as both countries work to restore ties strained since the 2020 Ladakh standoff, including resuming flights. *—PTI*

Days after shift to BJP, RS MP Sandeep booked in Punjab

CHANDIGARH/ NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Punjab Police has booked Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak, who recently switched from AAP to the BJP with six others, sources said on Saturday.

Two FIRs have been lodged against Pathak under non-bailable sections, they said.

Pathak was among the seven Rajya Sabha MPs who had quit the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and joined the BJP.

Reacting to the filing of FIR against its MP, BJP on Saturday accused AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal of indulging in vendetta politics and misusing the Punjab Police. It also alleged that law and order in the state has deteriorated.

BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi claimed that the police action reflects misplaced priorities.

Targeting Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Trivedi said, "Those who claim to represent a new kind of politics should explain how, in their state, law and order has completely collapsed."

Referring to the opposition's allegation that Mann was under the influence of alcohol in the Punjab assembly on Friday, Trivedi said the AAP government has failed to maintain governance.

"I want to clearly say to the AAP, the Punjab government, and especially Kejriwal that this is a fragile facade," he said.

Another BJP national spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, claimed that Kejriwal is misusing the Punjab Police to settle political scores, and Mann has become a party to it.

The state party leaders have also condemned the action against Pathak. *—PTI*

RECORD RS 81,000 CR ATTACHED

ED's arrests decline; highest-ever raids in FY26

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Arrests effected by the ED in money laundering cases have come down by about 27 per cent during the last financial year, but the value of attached assets recorded an all-time high at over 81,000 crore for the period, official data stated.

Searches or raids conducted by the central agency under the stringent provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) almost doubled to 2,892 during the 2025-26 fiscal that ended on March 31.

According to the data furnished by the ED in its annual report (FY 2025-26), the agency arrested 156 persons during the fiscal as compared to 214 in 2024-25, a decline of about 27 per cent. During 2023-24, the number stood at 272. The ED reasoned that the arrests were reduced because it was undertaking 'more targeted and evi-

dence-based investigations'.

The raids undertaken by the ED, often covered extensively in television news and newspapers, jumped to more than double at 2,892 during FY26, compared to 1,491 during the previous year.

The report added that the ED was not relying 'entirely' on physical searches but its investigators were 'triangulating' financial intelligence from multiple databases simultaneously, tracing cryptocurrency flows through block chain analytics and accessing corporate and property records in real-time.

This led the ED to successfully file a 'record' 812 chargesheets during FY26 as compared to 457 such complaints for prosecution filed before courts during the previous year.

That is why, the report said, ED has been able to 'significantly' reduce the life cycle of cases from the earlier three-four years to 1-1.5 years now.

ED Director Rahul Navin had last year reportedly set a target of restoring assets worth Rs 15,000 crore at the start of FY26.- *—PTI*

INDIA MUST CREATE BUFFERS TO NAVIGATE ENERGY SHOCK: CEA

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Saturday said India must build strategic buffers to tackle the "most difficult" energy shock arising from the West Asia crisis.

Speaking at an Ashoka University conference, he warned that rising global fertiliser and fuel prices could strain the fiscal deficit target of 4.3 per cent and trigger inflation, especially with a weak monsoon and partial price pass-through.

The current account deficit may exceed 2 per cent of GDP. Nageswaran said India should reduce import dependence on key metals and prepare for AI-driven job disruption by making the IT sector more competitive. Crude prices have surged to USD 126 per barrel.

He said the shock is largely price-driven, requiring a careful balance between fiscal support, inflation control and consumer impact. *—PTI*

Nida's bail plea rejected in Nashik TCS case

NASHIK, 2 MAY

A Nashik court rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Nida Khan on Saturday after the prosecution stressed the need for her custodial interrogation. Nida is an accused in a case of sexual harassment and forcible religious conversion at the TCS Nashik. "Nida is one of the prime accused and therefore her custodial interrogation is necessary. The court rejected her bail plea today," public prosecutor Ajay Misar said. The FIR says Nida asked women employees to dress as per Islamic traditions. Meanwhile, the custody of four other accused, Raza Rafiq Memon, 35, Tausif Attar, 37, Danish Sheikh, 32, and Shahrukh Husain Shaukat Qureshi, 34, was extended till 5 May. *—PTI*

Overground contact of ultras held in Pulwama

SRINAGAR, 2 MAY

Security forces arrested an overground worker (OGW) linked to terrorists in Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir. The OGW was identified as Umar Malik from Kachipora, South Kashmir. Authorities recovered a star pistol, two rounds of ammunition, a magazine, a Chinese grenade, a Pakistani grenade, and a mobile phone from Malik. Further details are awaited. The arrest is part of efforts to dismantle militant networks in the region, with security forces emphasising the importance of intelligence-led operations to combat terrorism and maintain peace in Jammu and Kashmir. *—PTI*

—ANI

Navy Chief visits Myanmar to beef up cooperation

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi commenced a four-day visit to Myanmar to bolster operational cooperation and explore new maritime security collaborations. The visit underscores India-Myanmar's long-standing friendship based on mutual respect and trust. Admiral Tripathi will meet Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief of armed forces General Ye Win Oo, Defence Minister General U Htun Aung, and navy officials. The talks aim to review ongoing cooperation, enhance operational linkages, and discuss capacity-building. Myanmar shares a 1,640km border with Indian states, making it vital under India's 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East', and 'MAHASAGAR' policies. The visit will include visits to Myanmar Navy's Central Naval Command and Fleet, focusing on maritime security and training. *—PTI*

T'gana CM asks RTC unions to prepare merger plan

HYDERABAD, 2 MAY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy instructed Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (RTC) unions to prepare an action plan regarding their demands, including the merger with the government. After meeting union representatives, Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, and officials, Reddy assured he would meet wage revision demands and withdraw cases filed against employees following recent strikes. He highlighted that the Congress government had appointed staff and increased buses. Reddy also announced land allotments for new bus terminals – 100 acres at Gajula Ramaram and 150 acres near the airport. Successful talks on 24 April resulted in the government agreeing to key demands, including merger, pay revision, and union elections. *—PTI*

Hoteliers protest against LPG hike nationwide

Hotels in Keralam to down shutters on 6 May

PALAKKAD, 2 MAY

Hotel and restaurant owners held a protest in Palakkad on Saturday against the recent Rs 1,000 hike in commercial LPG cylinder prices.

The protesters marched through the town holding placards and images of gas cylinders. They also carried two cylinders on a stretcher with a wreath placed on top.

The hotel and restaurant owners contended that it would be difficult for them to run their businesses in view of the high cost of commercial LPG.

They said that many of them had been forced to shut their establishments earlier due to the scarcity of commercial gas cylinders, and that they had only recently reopened.

The Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association had on Friday announced a statewide protest on 6 May against the Rs 993 hike in commercial LPG cylinder prices.

KHRA state president G Jayapal said that all hotels and restaurants in Keralam would be closed on that day in protest against the "unfair" increase in LPG prices.

He added that over the past five months, the price of a single cylinder had increased by Rs 1,498.

On 6 May, establishments will remain closed, and protest marches and dharnas will be held in front of district headquarters and oil company offices, he said.

In Delhi, restaurant owners and street food vendors have warned of higher menu rates and potential job losses.

KHRA president G Jayapal said in the last five months, the price of an LPG cylinder had risen by Rs 1,498 *—PTI*

- In Delhi, restaurant owners and street food vendors have warned of higher menu rates and potential job losses due to loss of business. Hotel owners in Shimla have also issued a similar warning

Hotel owners in Shimla condemned the steep hike of Rs 993 in commercial LPG cylinder prices and cautioned that it would fuel inflation.

"This is the second time after the start of the US-Israel-Iran war that the rates have been revised. The price of a 19 kg commercial cylinder has touched Rs 3,071 now," said a shopkeeper.

The price of a 5 kg cylinder has gone up from Rs 549 to Rs 810, registering a 48 per cent increase, which would hit migrant labourers very hard, he said. *— PTI*

Bargi Dam toll 10, search on for three missing tourists

JABALPUR, 2 MAY

Army divers expanded their search at the Bargi Dam in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday to locate a man and two children still missing after the cruise boat tragedy which claimed 10 lives two days ago, officials said. The body of Viraj Soni, 6, was recovered.

With 28 of the 41 identified passengers aboard the ill-fated cruise boat rescued safely, police are preparing to register an FIR in connection with the accident that occurred on Thursday, they said.

The search radius has been expanded to 5 km in the backwaters of the Bargi Dam, located downstream of the Narmada River, area sub-divisional officer of police (SDOP) Anjul Ayank Mishra said.

Police said around 200 rescuers, including around 20 Army divers flown from Agra, began the search at 5 am on Saturday to trace Kamraj, an employee of the Ordnance Factory in Khamaria, his son Tamil, 5, and Mayuram, 5.

Investigators said that CCTV footage near the boarding point showed 43 people heading towards the boat, and the names of 41 persons, who boarded, have been confirmed so far. Collector Raghvendra Singh confirmed that a search is underway for three missing persons. Five tourists from Tamil Nadu were among the nine who drowned in the Bargi dam, police said.

Three victims of Thursday's tragedy were natives of Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, and two were from Tiruppur, they added. *— PTI*

Rescue operations underway after a boat with 41 passengers and two crew members overturned in jabalpur's Bargi Dam due to a sudden storm *—PTI*

THREE DEAD, ONE INJURED IN JAMMU BRIDGE COLLAPSE

JAMMU, 2 MAY

Rescue teams recovered three bodies and an injured person from the debris of a partially collapsed bridge in Thuther, Bantalab, after a 12-hour search. One injured worker was rescued on Friday after the bridge's section gave way during foundation work, damaged in last year's floods.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary ordered suspension of two engineers, while a committee was formed to investigate. The rescue involved police, Army, NDRF, SDRF, and fire services. The bodies were recovered during the night, and the injured, including Fire Officer Mohammad Jaffar, received treatment. Choudhary ordered the suspension of the assistant and junior engineer involved. *—PTI*

Andhra man ends life in US after battling unemployment

KURNOOL, 2 MAY

A 26-year-old man from Kurnool district allegedly ended his life in the United States of America (USA), due to worries about repaying his family's debt, sources said on Saturday.

The man's family requested the authorities not to reveal the identity of the dead man as his parents are senior citizens suffering from numerous medical problems associated with their age.

Reacting to the incident, Andhra Pradesh Information Technology Minister Nara Lokesh expressed condolences and assured assistance for the repatriation of the man's mortal remains.

"My condolences to his family. I request Union Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu to ensure the transport of the mortal remains," Lokesh said in a post on X. An NRI in the US posted on social media that one of their members from Kurnool on Optional Practical Training (OPT) passed away in Chicago a few days ago.

He said the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) had completed the necessary documentation and formalities to send the mortal remains to India.

He requested assistance in expediting the cargo pickup, currently scheduled for Sunday, seeking an earlier arrangement considering the urgency. *— PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Angry villagers at the police checkpost after the incident *—SCRRENGRAB*

65-yr-old man rapes & kills 4-yr-old girl with stone in Pune

PUNE, 2 MAY

A four-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted and murdered with a stone by a labourer in Maharashtra's Pune district, police said on Saturday.

The police arrested a 65-year-old labourer in connection with the incident on Friday.

"The suspect lured the child promising food and took her to a cattle shed, where he sexually assaulted and killed her," he said. When the girl went missing, her relatives began looking for her. During the search, CCTV footage from a residence showed the man with the child. He was arrested soon after, he said. The incident triggered outrage in the area, and villagers demanded action against the suspect.

Pune Rural SP Sandip Singh Gill assured the public that a chargesheet will be filed within 15 days and the trial will be held in a fast-track court. "The suspect has a criminal history. Cases were registered against him in 1998 and 2015 but he was acquitted," Gill said.

- Pune Rural SP Gill assured the public that a chargesheet will be filed within 15 days and the trial will be held in a fast-track court. He said the suspect had a criminal history

A case has been registered against the accused under BNS and the POCSO Act.

Meanwhile, a warden and cook of a private school near Punalur in Keralam were arrested on Saturday and booked for allegedly physically assaulting a 12-year-old student for alleged theft, police said. The cook suspected that the boy stole Rs 500 from him and allegedly hung the boy upside down, while the warden is accused of having helped in the act.

The two were arrested and booked under the Juvenile Justice Act and the BNS, police said.

The boy does not have any problems as a consequence of the assault and is fine. *— PTI*

Heatwave to continue in Tamil Nadu till 5 May

CHENNAI, 2 MAY

The heatwave will continue in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry until 5 May, with temperatures expected to be 2-3°C above normal, accompanied by high humidity. The Regional Meteorological Centre in Chennai forecasted that districts including Chennai, Erode, Karur, Nagapattinam, Vellore, Coimbatore, and Madurai will experience above-normal temperatures.

Vellore recorded the highest temperature at 42.4°C. Heavy rain with thunderstorms and lightning is likely over Nilgiris, Theni, Erode, Salem, and Dindigul districts from Saturday to Monday, with Oothu in Tirunelveli receiving 8cm of rain in 24 hours.

The Met department warned of gusty winds and isolated heavy rain, causing discomfort in coastal areas.

Meanwhile, heavy summer rains lashed Kerala on Saturday, prompting the IMD to issue an 'orange alert' in four districts on Saturday.

The IMD issued an 'orange alert' for Ernakulam, Thrissur, Idukki and Malappuram districts for three hours from 2.30 pm onwards. It also predicted thunderstorms accompanied by winds reaching speeds of up to 50 kmph in these districts.

An 'orange alert' indicates very heavy rainfall ranging from 11 cm to 20 cm. *— PTI*

Training did it, says mom of kid who crossed Palk Strait

Ishank Singh with his coach and his mother Manisha Sinha after his swim across the Palk Strait *—PTI*

RANCHI, 2 MAY

The proud mother of 7-year-old Ishank Singh, who scripted history by swimming across the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka, said on Saturday that the feat was achieved after months of rigorous training lasting seven to eight hours daily.

Ishank swam across the Palk Strait, a 29-km stretch, on 30 April. He started from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka and reached Dhanushkodi in Tamil Nadu in 9 hours and 50 minutes. His mother, Manisha Sinha, said Ishank took to swimming at the age of three and developed an interest in long-distance events. "He used to train in pools in Ranchi, but for the last six months, he shifted to Dhurwa Dam to prepare for Palk Strait," she said.

Ishank, who returned to Ranchi on Friday, said he was thrilled after completing the swim. A class 3 student of Jawahar Vidya Mandir, Shyamli, the alma mater of MS Dhoni, Ishank has been conferred the titles 'Youngest and Fastest Palk Strait Swimmer' by the Universal Records Forum and the '2026 OWSAT World Record' by the Open Water Swimming Academy, Theni. *— PTI*

COPS DENY CHARGES

Muslim cleric 'assaulted, thrown off train' in Uttar Pradesh

BAREILLY, 2 MAY

The body of a 29-year-old Muslim cleric was found on railway tracks here. One of his relatives alleged that he was thrown off a train, a claim denied by the police, officials said on Saturday.

Bareilly SP (City) Manush Pareek said the body was discovered on the morning of 27 April along railway tracks near Lal Phatak in the Cantt police station area.

Eyewitnesses told the police that the deceased, Maulana Tausif Raza Mazhari, 29, a resident of Thakurganj in Bihar, had fallen from the train, he said.

Police contacted the cleric's family and local leaders and learnt that he had come to Bareilly to attend the 'Urs-e-Tajushsharia' event held on 24-25 April.

Speaking to local reporters, Tousif's father, Mohammad Abul Hussain, said, "At 7 am, my daughter-in-law Tabassum told me that Tousif had been assaulted and that there was no response on his phone after that. Around 9:30 am, I called my son's number again. This time, someone identifying himself as a member of the Bareilly police answered the call and said that my son was in a serious condition and needed medical attention."

No formal complaint has been received so far, and it is yet to be ascertained whether there was an assault or robbery, police said.

The body has been sent for autopsy and an investigation is underway, they said.

However, All India Muslim Jamaat President Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Barelvi alleged that the cleric was assaulted by "anti-social elements" in the train while returning home and thrown out during an attempted robbery.

He claimed that during the assault, the cleric had called his wife, Tabassum Khatoon, narrating the incident.

Razvi said police have assured an impartial investigation and action in the matter. *— PTI*

Neighbours at the house of Tausif Raza Mazhari in Bihar's Thakurganj *—PTI*

One more held for Patiala freight railway track blast

CHANDIGARH, 2 MAY

The Punjab Police said on Saturday that it has arrested one more person in connection with the freight corridor railway track blast in Shambhu in Patiala.

Gurjinder Singh alias Baba Beant has been arrested by the State Special Operation Cell in Amritsar, the Patiala Police and the Counter Intelligence wing in Pathankot, said DGP Gaurav Yadav.

Gurjinder is a key associate of Jagroop Singh, who was killed while attempting to detonate the explosives at the track on the night of 27 April.

"Preliminary investigation revealed his role in the Shambhu blast, Sirhind railway track blast, and the grenade attack on CIA #Moga, all executed as per the directions of his foreign-based handlers," Yadav said in a post on X.

A pro-Khalistan terror module, backed by Pakistan's ISI, was responsible for the blast. Four of its members were arrested earlier.

The explosion occurred near Bothonia village on the rail track dedicated to freight trains, leaving a small crater beneath the railway line, police said. *— PTI*

UNDERWATER MARVELS

Andamans set a Guinness World Record by unfurling the largest underwater national flag. The tricolour, measuring approximately 60 by 40 metres, was deployed beneath the sea in a complex, coordinated operation, involving multiple agencies and trained divers at Swaraj Dweep (Havelock Island), on Saturday –PTI

Iran businesses crushed in prolonged internet shutdown

At her studio in Iran's capital, Amen Khademi prepared a fashion shoot for a jacket she designed with Persian-inspired motifs. But even as she applied lipstick to the model, she was distracted, worrying if her business would survive after four months without its main link to customers — the internet.

Iran's 90 million people have been cut off from the internet for most of 2026, one of the world's longest and strictest national shutdowns. That is devastating for an online economy that had long defied government restrictions and international sanctions. From fashion to fitness, to advertising and retailers, many have seen their incomes evaporate.

Khademi hasn't made a sale in months.

Despite an uneasy truce with the US and Israel, Iran's government have refused to reverse the shutdown they call a wartime necessity. But this adds to mass job losses and an ongoing US blockade.

Before January, Iranians could access the internet, but authorities blocked a large amount of content. Now, all access to the global web has been shut down. Some workarounds exist, but they have become enormously expensive and out of reach for most Iranians.

The internet cutoff costs the economy an estimated USD 30-40 million daily, with indirect losses likely twice that much, a member of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Afshin Kolahi, told a local newspaper. About 10 million people have jobs that depend on internet connectivity, according to the communications minister, Sattar Hashemi.

Throughout years of economic turmoil in Iran brought on by sanctions and mismanagement, platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp helped small businesses to find customers, and people to earn extra income to afford skyrocketing prices for basic goods.

Iranian authorities first shut down the internet in January during mass anti-government protests. That cutoff was just starting to ease when the government imposed a complete internet blackout on 28 February when the US and Israel launched the war.

Iran's government began restricting the internet during the protests in January, but the prolonged shutdown after the war is unprecedented –IRNA

Mahsa Alimardani, an expert on internet censorship, said Kashmir and Myanmar have had longer blocks affecting specific regions or platforms. Countries like China, with its "Great Firewall," and North Korea have always strictly limited access to the global internet.

"What makes Iran's shutdown unprecedented is the combination of scale and severity: an entire country of 90 million people with a developed digital economy deliberately reverted to a controlled national intranet," said Alimardani, an Associate Director for Technology Threats and Opportunities at the rights group Witness.

A flagship company of Iran's digital economy, online retailer DigiKala, recently said it was laying off 200 people, about 3 per cent of its workforce. The pain extends to "production, foreign trade and even traditional business," Reza Olfatnasab, head of a national group representing digital businesses, said.

Khademi's shopfront is on Instagram. But her studio's page — with more than 30,000 followers — is now inactive. She was doing the photo shoot to save the pictures for later, hoping to find an alternative.

Her model, Farnaz Ojaghloo, is also a fitness coach. The shutdown has dried up both her modelling gigs and the online courses.

"All the plans you had for six months or a year ahead get pushed aside," Ojaghloo said.

THE ALTERNATIVES ARE 'TERRIBLE'

For years, authorities in Iran have enforced filters and policed content on platforms like YouTube and Instagram. But before the war, Iranians could bypass restrictions with cheap virtual private networks (VPNs) and other easy workarounds.

Now, the shutdown has stoked high prices for black-market VPNs. Iranian state media routinely report arrests of people for using illegal VPNs or Starlink.

Senior government officials are awarded "white" SIM cards, granting them access to the global internet. To alleviate the economic harm, the government is now allowing less-restricted internet access to a small number of professions, businesses, and media.

An e-commerce trade group in Tehran condemned the tiered system, calling it "an abuse of an obvious need of every citizen." It said the outage threatens "the destruction of the country's infrastructure at the hands of our own decision-makers."

The vast majority of people have no choice but Iran's national network.

A Tehran resident who works in advertising said sponsors have little interest in paying for content that can't be posted on major platforms like Instagram, where he has tens of thousands of followers. He said his income is down to near zero since the war began.

A gamer in Isfahan said Iran's domestic net "is terrible" — slow, insecure and full of bugs. He, too, has lost almost all his income from sponsors and donations.

Iran has its own social media platforms modelled on services like WhatsApp and YouTube, but content is closely monitored and often censored.

A GROWING NUMBER OF STREET VENDORS

The shutdown has piled new pressures on Iran's once large and educated middle class, already struggling in the face of a prewar currency crash. Economic decline in Iran has spurred waves of anti-government protests, most recently in December. Now, more Iranians are thinking of emigrating, a software developer said.

The developer — likewise speaking on condition of anonymity out of safety fears — said the internet shutdown has wiped out remote work. He lost his own job when his former company laid off almost all its employees in recent weeks, he said.

The consequences are visible in the rising number of street peddlers in Tehran. Reza Amiri, a 32-year-old former employee of an internet provider, now sells hats and umbrellas by a metro stop. He lost his job after the war started. —PTI

SALAR سالار

UAE exited from OPEC to defy Saudi dominance

In a move that has been described by analysts as a "watershed moment" for West Asia, the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday announced its withdrawal from the OPEC and OPEC+ groupings, marking a definitive end to decades of economic deference to Saudi Arabia.

A new strategic analysis by PSIFOS Consulting Group has characterised the decision not as a mere technical adjustment but as a "political rebellion" against Riyadh's dominance over regional energy policy. The move signals a fundamental shift in Emirati foreign policy, as the nation charts an independent course orientated toward the United States, Israel, and rapidly growing Asian markets. For years, tension has simmered within the OPEC+ framework between the region's two largest economies.

The Emirati strategy is to prioritise market share over price, as it has a more diversified economy and a low production cost. Analysts say Abu Dhabi seeks to maximise sales volumes, even if it means accepting modestly lower prices.

"The UAE withdrawal marks the formal conclusion of its economic deference to Saudi-led policies," the PSIFOS report states, noting that the relationship has evolved from a close alliance into "intense economic competition".

A primary driver behind the exit is the UAE's fear of "stranded assets"--oil reserves that may lose their economic value before they can be extracted. With global fossil fuel demand projected to peak by 2040, Abu Dhabi is engaged in a race to monetise its resources while they still hold significant value.

The UAE has already invested over USD 122 billion to expand its production capacity to 5 million barrels per day by 2030. However, OPEC's restrictive quotas have historically capped Emirati output at between 2.6 million and 3.1 million barrels per day.

By exiting the cartel, the UAE can finally unlock its massive infrastructure investments and generate the liquidity needed to fund its own transition toward a green economy, including hubs for hydrogen and renewable energy.

Furthermore, Abu Dhabi intends to establish its "Murban" crude as a global pricing benchmark to compete with Brent and WTI. This ambition requires a level of supply flexibility that OPEC's rigid quota system simply cannot accommodate.

On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump welcomed the UAE's decision to exit the OPEC and OPEC+ alliance, saying the move could help bring down global oil and gas prices."That's a good thing for getting the price of gas down, getting oil down, getting everything down. They have it all. He's a great leader, actually.

I'm okay. They're having some problems in OPEC," Trump said as he referred to UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Analysts say the UAE's exit effectively dismantles the Arab-Russian consensus on oil pricing and erodes the bloc's ability to "weaponise" energy supplies. The UAE is now expected to bypass OPEC's collective pricing mechanisms to negotiate direct, preferential supply agreements with China and India--the shifting "centre of gravity" for global oil demand.Within the Gulf, the withdrawal leaves Saudi Arabia increasingly isolated. Historically, the UAE acted as a counterbalance to Russia's frequent overproduction. Without Abu Dhabi's moderating presence, analysts warn that Riyadh may be forced into a "destabilising price war" to enforce discipline among remaining members.

The PSIFOS Consulting Group report concludes that the UAE's departure risks fracturing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) into competing blocs. "This is not merely a technical adjustment," the analysis concludes. "It is an earthquake that reshapes the geopolitical architecture of Gulf energy relations... with consequences that will reverberate across regional politics, global markets, and international alliances for years to come."

Meanwhile, another report by ICICI Securities noted that while the immediate impact of the UAE's exit from OPEC may remain limited due to ongoing disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz amid the conflict in West Asia, the long-term outlook points to increased production from the UAE.

The country has already built significant spare capacity, which could enter global markets once logistical constraints ease.

"We believe this move may help soften prices in the longer term, although volatility in the markets may spike owing to lower cohesive supply management from OPEC," the report said. The report also flagged broader implications for the cartel, suggesting that the UAE's exit could prompt other member nations to reassess the benefits of remaining within OPEC, particularly amid declining revenues and geopolitical disruptions. —ANI

UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan and Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Mohammed Bin Salman were once seen as close allies –SAUDI PRESS AGENCY

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Ukraine strikes on Russia's oil facilities could threaten fuel prices

Ukrainian drones are flying deep into Russia to strike oil facilities, sending up plumes of smoke that can be seen from space and bringing toxic rain to tourist destinations on the Black Sea.

The attacks are aimed at slashing Moscow's oil exports, a key source of revenue for its invasion of Ukraine. But the economic impact is so far unclear, as the rise in oil prices from the Iran war, and a related easing of US sanctions, have helped replenish the Kremlin's coffers.

Still, the range of the attacks and their environmental impact is bringing the war home to ordinary Russians far from the front lines.

OIL IS SPILLING ONTO THE STREET

Ukrainian drones have hit the oil refinery and export terminal in the Black Sea town of Tuapse on four occasions in just over two weeks, sparking fires that prompted local evacuations and sent up massive plumes of smoke. The town is roughly 450kms from the front lines.

In a video posted by local Gov Veniamin Kondratyev after the third attack on 18 April, an emergency official said boiling oil products had spilt onto the street, damaging cars.

Ukraine said on Thursday that it hit an oil pumping station in Russia's Perm region, more than 1,500km from Ukraine, two days in a row. Russian media reported the attacks, though Perm Gov Dmitry Makhonin said only that drones had hit industrial facilities.

Ust-Luga on the Baltic Sea, one of Russia's largest oil and gas export terminals, was hit three times in the space of a week in late March. It is more than 800km away from Ukraine.

In a broadcast several weeks later, regional Gov Alexander Drozdenko declared that the area around St Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, was a "front-line region" due to aerial threats.

ATTACKS COST RUSSIA BILLIONS: UKRAINE

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has compared such strikes to the international sanctions on Russia. They are seen as even more crucial now that Moscow is collecting windfall profits from the global energy crisis linked to Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Zelenskyy said on Friday that Russia has lost at least USD 7 billion since the start of the year as a direct result of attacks on its oil sector. Earlier, he said Ukrainian intelligence indicates a drop in exports from key oil ports such as Ust-Luga and Primorsk.

But the full economic impact remains unclear as Russia benefits from the West Asia crisis.

Russian crude and oil product exports rose by 320,000 barrels per day month-on-month to hit 7.1 million in March, the International Energy Agency said. Rising prices meant that oil export revenues almost doubled, from USD 9.7 billion to USD 19 billion. It is unclear whether April's strikes will disrupt that trend.

"US action against Iran has saved both the Russian oil sector and the federal budget from a crisis that was clearly developing in late February," said Chris Weafer, CEO of Macro-Advisory Ltd Consultancy.

The damage to Russia's oil infrastructure has meanwhile been far less significant than the massive explosions would suggest, he said.

"If you hit an oil tank, particularly an oil tank that's not full, the vapours ignite, and you get the flames. So it looks very spectacular." But that only delays deliveries by a couple of days, he said. "It's much less damaging than hitting the pump stations or the compressors or the loading infrastructure. And that appears to be well protected. The tanks are not."

STRETCHING RUSSIA'S DEFENCES

The ability to strike key infrastructure deep inside Russia has highlighted Ukraine's growing military capabilities and put pressure on Moscow's overstretched air defences. It has also forced more Russians to confront the consequences of a war their government claims to be winning.

Ukraine's Defence Ministry says its forces have more than doubled the range of their deep-strike capabilities since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. The increased range also allows drones to attack locations from different directions, complicating countermeasures. Drones are hitting places that Russia wouldn't have expected four years ago, said Marcel Plichta, a PhD candidate in the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews.

LONG CONSEQUENCES

Russian officials are usually reluctant to comment on deep strikes. But the Tuapse attacks and the images that followed gained traction in Russian media. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned of "serious environmental consequences" while insisting things were under control.

Officials warned that high levels of benzene, a carcinogen found in oil products, had been recorded in the air while fires burned and urged residents to limit time outdoors.

Residents also widely reported "black rain," oily droplets falling on their skin and clothes. Local news outlets posted images of stray dogs and cats with their coats stained grey. Oil spills along the coastline have coated birds and fish, and Russian media recently circulated images of beached dolphins.

Those images are shocking to Russian accustomed to vacationing on the Black Sea coast. Vladimir Slivyak, co-chairman of the Russian environmental group Ecodefense, said there could be long-term consequences for human health and the region's ecosystem.

"There is a lot of oil in the sea," he said. "In the next few years, every storm will bring more oil pollution onto the coast." —PTI

This satellite image provided by Vantor shows smoke rising from oil infrastructure in Tuapse in the southern Krasnodar region of Russia on 16 April, after the town's oil refinery and shipping terminal were attacked by Ukrainian drones multiple times in preceding weeks –PTI

QUOTE of THE DAY

"It's actually treasonous... (for the) Radical Left to say, 'We're not winning (in Iran)

—DONALD TRUMP, US President

Iran says war 'likely' to resume again

US threatens to sanction ships paying Iran's Hormuz toll

TEHRAN, 2 MAY

Iran said on Saturday that the war with the US and Israel is "likely" to flare up again.

A "renewed conflict between Iran and the United States is likely," said Mohammad Jafar Asadi, a high-level officer in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a day after US President Donald Trump said he was not "satisfied" with the latest peace deal that Tehran sent through Pakistan.

The details of the proposal were not made public, but reports said that Iran was willing to open the Strait of Hormuz if its nuclear programme was not discussed in any future negotiations.

Iran also stressed that it was ready if the war began.

"The actions and statements of US officials are primarily media-driven aimed first at preventing a drop in oil prices and second at extricating themselves from the mess they have created. The armed forces are fully prepared for any new adventures or foolishness from the Americans," said Sardar Asadi, Deputy Inspector of Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, as per state-run Fars News Agency.

Iran said it was ready if the war began —FARS NEWS AGENCY

TRUMP WON'T PULL OUT

Trump ruled out an "early exit" from the region.

"We're not going to leave early and have this kind of problem arise in three more years," Trump said, after touting America's alleged military success in the region. "We stopped them with the B2 bombers. If we didn't do that, they would've had a nuclear weapon. Israel, the Middle East, and Europe would have been blown to pieces."

Meanwhile, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control said that any ships paying Iran's tolls to pass through critical the Strait of Hormuz may face sanctions. Iran's "tollbooth" has reportedly been accepting payments in Chinese Yuan or cryptocurrency.

ISRAEL KILLS 10 IN LEBANON

Israeli strikes continued in various regions of Lebanon. State media said that at least 10 people were killed.

NOBEL LAUREATE CRITICAL

Imprisoned Nobel Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi remained hospitalised in Zanjan in northwestern Iran after being transferred there from prison late on Friday. Her foundation described the condition as "very high risk", with fluctuating blood pressure and severe nausea. Medical teams have requested she be trasferred to Tehran for angiography, but the government is against it, said her husband, Taghi Rahmani. —*Agencies*

Germany hosts 36,000 US personnel, and nuclear warheads —x

US to pullout 5,000 troops from Germany

WASHINGTON, 2 MAY

The US will withdraw about 5,000 troops from Germany in the next six to 12 months, the Pentagon said on Friday, fulfilling President Donald Trump's threat as he clashes with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz over the war on Iran.

Trump had threatened to withdraw some troops from the NATO ally earlier this week after Merz said the US was being "humiliated" by Iran leadership.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement that the "decision... is in recognition of... conditions on the ground."

The number of troops leaving Germany would be 14 per cent of the 36,000 American service members stationed there.

Germany hosts several US military facilities, including the headquarters of its European and Africa commands, Ramstein Air Base and a medical centre in Landstuhl, where casualties from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were treated. US nuclear missiles are also stationed in the country.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius called the move "foreseeable", but added that "the presence of American soldiers in Europe, and especially in Germany, is in (both) our interest(s)". —*PTI*

US blockade of Hormuz has cost Iran $4.8 bn: Pentagon

The US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has cost Iran nearly USD 4.8 billion in oil revenue, significantly tightening financial pressure on Tehran, according to an Axios citing Pentagon estimates.

US approves $8.6bn military sales to Israel, Gulf allies

The US has approved military sales worth more than USD 8.6 billion to Israel, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The US State Department announced the arms sales on Friday.

'Navy will take Cuba on way home'

WASHINGTON, 2 MAY

President Donald Trump said that the US Navy will "take" on Cuba on the way home from Iran, "almost immediately".

"Cuba's got problems," Trump said on Friday before the non-profit Forum Club of the Palm Beaches. He appeared to be joking, but he has repeatedly said that the US will "take" Cuba after Iran.

"On the way back from Iran, we'll have one of our big, maybe the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier — the biggest in the world — we'll have that come in, stop about 100 yards offshore, and they'll say, 'Thank you very much. We give up'," he said.

The US' sanctions on Cuba have crippled the island nation's already weak economy. On Friday, Trump issued an executive order to expand sanctions on the Cuban government.

US President Donald Trump posted a bizarre AI image of him in a pool with senior officials —TRUTH SOCIAL

The Cuban government has firmly rejected the sanctions, calling them "unilateral coercive measures" intended to impose "collective punishment on the Cuban people". —*PTI*

14 IRGC members killed in unexploded munition blast

TEHRAN, 2 APRIL

An explosion of leftover bombs from strikes during the war against Iran killed 14 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Iranian media reported on Friday. It was the largest number of Revolutionary Guard members reported to be killed since the ceasefire began on 7 April. The report said the ammunition included cluster bombs and air mines dropped during the fighting.

The incident occurred in Zanjan, and state-run Fars News Agency said that region has approximately 1,200 hectares of agricultural land at risk due to the presence of unexploded ordnance. —*Agencies*

B'desh starts flood protection near Ganga-B'putra

DHAKA, 2 MAY

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Saturday launched a riverfront development project along the Surma River in Sylhet district to strengthen flood protection infrastructure and improve river banks, state-run BSS reported. The project is part of broader efforts to reduce flood damage in the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta. A 2024 UNICEF report said flash floods in Sylhet division affected more than 2 million people, with over 51,000 displaced. Rahman also inaugurated re-excavation of the Basia River, a canal linked to the Surma. Officials said the work will improve irrigation and protect local communities from floods and waterlogging. —*PTI*

Bard College President to retire over Epstein ties

ANNADALE-ON-HUDSON, 2 MAY

Bard College President Leon Botstein announced his retirement Friday, following scrutiny over his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. The 79-year-old will step down at the end of June but will remain on faculty as a teacher and musician. An independent review examined their interactions, finding he did not commit any illegal acts but acknowledged decisions that reflect on his leadership. The college's trustees expressed gratitude but admitted concerns. Epstein donated USD 150,000 to Bard, and Botstein had met him multiple times, including on occasions involving Epstein's helicopter. Funds linked to Epstein will now support organisations aiding sexual harm survivors. —*PTI*

Conway, creator of Spiderman's Punisher, dies at 73

SAN FRANCISCO, 2 MAY

Gerry Conway, a legendary comic book writer behind Marvel and DC characters such as the Punisher, has died aged 73. Conway passed away from pancreatic cancer in Thousand Oaks, California, his wife Laura confirmed. Marvel described him as "a prolific comic book writer with a lasting legacy". Conway's career began as a teenager, and by 19 he was working on 'The Amazing Spider-Man'. He co-created the Punisher and wrote pivotal stories like Gwen Stacy's death. His contributions also shaped characters like Firestorm and Power Girl at DC. His wife described him as dedicated to fans and comics, saying, "He was the kind of person you never forget." —*PTI*

'Nobody Against Putin' director's Oscar found

LONDON, 2 MAY

Lufthansa has located the Oscar belonging to Russian filmmaker Pasha Talankin, which went missing after airport security flagged it as a potential weapon. Talankin, co-director of the Oscar-winning documentary "Mr. Nobody Against Putin," was left shocked when the statuette vanished during his flight from New York to Frankfurt. Lufthansa confirmed the trophy is now in Frankfurt and will be returned "as quickly as possible". The airline launched an internal review. The issue arose when security officials refused to let Talankin carry the Oscar onboard, offering to escort or store it in the cockpit, but he was asked to check it as cargo. Talankin, living in exile, called it "completely baffling" that an Oscar was considered a weapon. —*PT*

US court blocks access of abortion pills by mail

NEW ORLEANS, 2 MAY

- The ruling is the biggest jolt to US abortion policy since the 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v Wade, allowing states to enforce abortion bans

US federal appeals court ruled on Friday to restrict access to one of the most common means of abortion in the US by blocking the mailing of Mifepristone prescriptions. Overruling regulations set by the federal Food and Drug Administration, the appeal requires that the abortion pill be distributed only in person.

The ruling — likely to be appealed in the US Supreme Court — is the biggest jolt to US abortion policy since the 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v Wade, allowing states to enforce abortion bans.

Judge Kyle Duncan, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, agreed with the state of Louisiana that allowing the drug to be mailed nullifies the state's ban on abortion.

Mifepristone was approved in 2000 as a safe and effective way to end early pregnancies. It is typically used in combination with misoprostol. 1 in 4 abortions nationally are prescribed via telehealth. Women in states where abortion is banned often obtain the medical treatment by crossing state lines. —*PTI*

Gaza kids bitten by rats in their sleep

GAZA CITY, 2 MAY

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is continuing to worsen in Gaza, with rats and parasites spreading through displacement camps and biting children and people when they sleep, and gnawing through their few remaining possessions.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said that over 80 per cent of more than 1,600 displacement sites in Gaza it assessed in mid-April reported rodents or pests frequently visible.

Skin infections or rashes were reported in nearly two thirds of sites, lice in over 65 per cent, and bedbugs in more than half. Children account for about 47 per cent of Gaza's population, meaning about 680,000 children - about two-thirds of all children in Gaza - are living in displacement sites plagued of rodents or pests.

Children account for about 47 per cent of Gaza's population —UN

The Israeli military blockade of aid and commercial goods entering Gaza has left families unable to access pesticides to control the infestation, while the water and sanitation systems have been decimated by more than two years of war.

"Crowded displacement sites into breeding grounds for disease, surrounded by piles of rubble and garbage," stated Save the Children. The growing number of rodents in one of the most densely populated areas of the world has led to the spread of diseases like scabies, pneumonia and diarrhoea.

The US-brokered ceasefire has reduced Israel's bombing and alleviated the threat of famine, but millions still suffer from acute food shortages, the UN stated. —*Agencies*

2 killed in Ukraine as Russia attacks minibus, claims progress

KYIV, 2 MAY

Two people were killed after a Russian drone attacked a minibus in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, local officials said Saturday. Seven people were also wounded in the attack, regional head Oleksandr Prokudin said. Hours later Russia attacked another minibus in Kherson, wounding the driver, he said.

On Ukraine's Black Sea coast, a Russian strike damaged port infrastructure in the city of Odesa. No casualties were reported.

US-brokered talks between Moscow and Kyiv over the past year have brought no respite, with Russia rejecting Ukraine's offer of a ceasefire, and in recent weeks the Iran war has diverted international attention from the war.

Firefighters put out a blaze in Ukraine's Odesa region which was hit by Russian drones —UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES

Meanwhile, on the roughly 1,250km front line, Russia claimed on Saturday it had taken control of the village of Myropillia in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region.

Ukraine did not immediately comment. —*PTI*

MALI LOSES ANOTHER TOWN, SAYS OFFICERS WORKING WITH JIHADISTS

BAMAKO, 2 MAY

Mali's authorities said some military officers collaborated with jihadis behind the country's largest attacks in over a decade, as separatists claimed they captured another town.

A prosecutor's statement cited "solid evidence regarding the complicity of certain military personnel," including serving and dismissed officers involved in the "planning, coordination, and execution" of assaults alongside al-Qaida-linked Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin and the Azawad Liberation Front.

Separatists claimed they captured the strategic Tessalit military camp after Malian troops and Russian Africa Corps forces withdrew. The claim could not be verified.

This comes after jihadists took over Mali's Kidal—AFRICAN CORPS

The offensive, launched with near-simultaneous attacks on Bamako's airport and other towns, has hit at least 10 locations and forced withdrawals from the northern city of Kidal. Militants have also blocked key roads into Bamako, disrupting travel and worsening existing fuel shortages.

Mali's junta, in power since a 2020 coup, vowed to press its campaign. —*PTI*

Khalistani elements pose national security threat: Canadian Intel

OTTAWA, 2 MAY

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) said in a report on Friday that Khalistani elements promote a violent extremist agenda. The report further claimed China, Russia and India interfered in Canada's internal politics through espionage, and are not the only countries that sought to do so.

The report cites, "The 40th anniversary of the bombing of Air India Flight 182, whose suspects were members of Canada-based Khalistani extremist (CBKE) groups. It remains to this day the deadliest terrorist attack in Canadian history, with 329 people killed. There were no CBKE-related attacks in Canada in 2025.

The report further alleges that India has historically built covert ties with Canadian politicians, journalists, and Indo-Canadian community members to advance its interests, including through transnational repression. It adds that Canada should remain vigilant.

India-Canada ties had hit rock bottom over Canada's perceived leniency towards Khalistani elements and Canada's allegations that Indian agents were involved in the killing of NIA-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside a gurdwara in Canada in 2023. India had strongly rejected the allegations and termed them "politically motivated". —*ANI*

ACADEMY REVISES CRITERIA

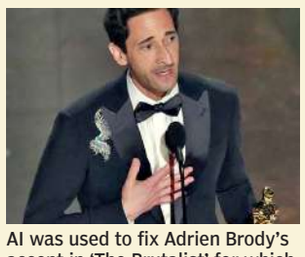
AI screenplays won't get an Oscar, but actors might

LOS ANGELES, 2 MAY

The Academy behind the Oscars on Friday updated its rules across categories for the 2027 Awards to emphasise human authorship, in its first address on the use of artificial intelligence in performances and scripts, without outright banning AI. The new rules say the tools neither help nor hurt nomination chances, and the Academy will judge how central human authorship was when awarding films.

When it comes to the eligibility of performances, only roles "demonstrably performed by humans with their consent" will be considered. There is less ambiguity in the screenplay categories, where the rules state that "screenplays must be human-authored."

The new rules also include significant changes to the international film category, expanding eligibility to include top qualifiers from prestigious film festivals like Cannes, Venice and Toronto. Furthermore, International films will be named as nominees rather than their countries, with awards accepted by the filmmaker; the director's name will appear on the Oscar plaque after the film title and country, if applicable.



AI was used to fix Adrien Brody's accent in 'The Brutalist' for which he won Best Actor in 2024 —x

For a original songs used during end credits, the first music cue must begin no later than the last 15 seconds of the film — before the credits roll — and carry over into them. The academy has often revised standards with technological advances. —*PTI*

— PTI

TVS Motor total sales up 7% in April

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

TVS Motor Company on Saturday reported a 7 per cent growth in total sales at 4,73,970 units in April 2026 as against 4,43,716 units in the same month last year. Total two-wheeler sales grew 6 per cent at 4,55,333 units last month as against 4,30,150 units in April 2025, TVS Motor Company said. Domestic two-wheeler sales were at 3,48,545 units in April 2026 as against 3,23,647 units a year ago, up 8 per cent. The company said its motorcycle sales last month were down at 2,00,039 units as against 2,20,347 units in April 2025, while scooters registered a growth of 24 per cent at 2,11,158 units as compared to 1,69,741 units. Electric vehicles saw 36 per cent increase at 37,771 units last month as compared to 27,684 units a year ago. Three-wheeler sales were up 37 per cent at 18,637 units in the month under review as against 13,566 units in the year-ago period. —PTI

Dollar Industries founder Dindayal Gupta dies at 88

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Dindayal Gupta, founder and chairman emeritus of hosiery major Dollar Industries Limited, died on Saturday due to age-related ailments, a statement said. He was 88. Gupta is survived by his wife, four sons and grandchildren, who now manage the Dollar Industries business. Born on 13 September, 1937, in Manheru village of Haryana's Bhiwani district, Gupta moved to Kolkata in 1962 and began manufacturing and selling hosiery products tailored to customer requirements, gradually building manufacturing facilities, retail networks and markets overlooked by competitors. He laid the foundation of Dollar Industries Limited in 1972, and over five decades steered it from modest beginnings into one of India's leading hosiery and apparel manufacturers with revenues exceeding Rs 1,700 crore. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the West Bengal Hosiery Association and the Sanmarg Business Award, among other recognitions. —PTI

AI to cut int'l flights amid fuel surge, airspace curbs

The cuts are for June and July; CEO says can't raise air fares

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Air India has curtailed flight schedules and signalled further reductions in the coming months, citing a steep rise in jet fuel prices, airspace restrictions, and longer flying routes that have rendered several international operations unviable.

According to sources familiar with a communication by Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson, the airline has already scaled back some services in April and May as fuel costs surged sharply. These pressures, he noted, have made many international routes "unprofitable to operate".

The airline has already scaled back some services in April and May as fuel costs surged sharply —ANI

The situation, Wilson warned, remains "extremely challenging", leaving the airline with little option but to trim schedules further in June and July. While domestic operations have also been affected, the impact has been comparatively limited due to the government's cap on domestic fuel price increases at 25 per cent.

To manage escalating costs, Air India has introduced fare hikes and fuel surcharges. However, Wilson acknowledged limited scope for further increases, as higher ticket prices risk dampening demand. "We can only raise fares so far before people decide to stay home," he said.

The airline also expressed concern over geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East, which have disrupted operations and extended flight routes. Wilson voiced hope that the situation stabilises soon, including the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, to restore more normal operating conditions.

Despite near-term challenges, Air India said it remains committed to its long-term transformation strategy. This includes fleet modernisation, improved onboard services, and enhanced customer experience. The airline has also secured government approval to introduce a hub-and-spoke model. Under this system, passengers from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities will be able to complete immigration and customs formalities at their origin airports, enabling smoother transit through major hubs such as Delhi and Mumbai.

Air India added that it continues to expand international connectivity, strengthen partnerships, and invest in training initiatives as part of its broader growth plans. —PTI

The airline has struggled financially since the Covid-19 pandemic, weighed down by rising costs and mounting debt —ANI

Spirit Airlines shuts down after 34 years

WEST PALM BEACH, 2 MAY

Spirit Airlines has announced it is ceasing operations with immediate effect, bringing an end to 34 years of business for the US ultra-low-cost carrier.

The airline said it had "started an orderly wind-down of our operations", cancelling all flights and shutting down customer service. While refunds will be issued, passengers will not receive assistance in rebooking with other airlines.

The closure follows the failure to secure a government bailout. President Donald Trump said his administration had offered a "final proposal" for a taxpayer-funded rescue, but no agreement was reached. The airline had entered bankruptcy proceedings for the second time in under two years amid soaring jet fuel prices linked to the Iran conflict.

Spirit, once known for its bright yellow aircraft, deep discount fares and irreverent marketing, employed around 17,000 people. Its collapse is expected to significantly impact jobs, with warnings that reduced competition could drive up fares. The airline has struggled financially since the Covid-19 pandemic, weighed down by rising costs and mounting debt. By November 2024, when it first filed for Chapter 11 protection, it had accumulated losses exceeding USD 2.5 billion since 2020.

A second bankruptcy filing in August 2025 revealed USD 8.1 billion in debts against USD 8.6 billion in assets.

Passenger numbers and capacity had also declined sharply. The airline carried around 1.7 million domestic passengers in February, about half a million fewer than a year earlier. —PTI

Govt appoints Rohit Jain as RBI Deputy Governor

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The government has appointed Rohit Jain as Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India for a three-year term.

Jain is replacing T Rabi Sankar, whose extended tenure ended on Saturday.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment for a period of three years from 3 May, sources said.

Jain is currently Executive Director at RBI.

According to the RBI Act, 1934, the central bank should have four deputy governors, two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and an economist to head the monetary policy department.

The other three deputy governors are Swaminathan J, Poonam Gupta and S C Murmu. —PTI

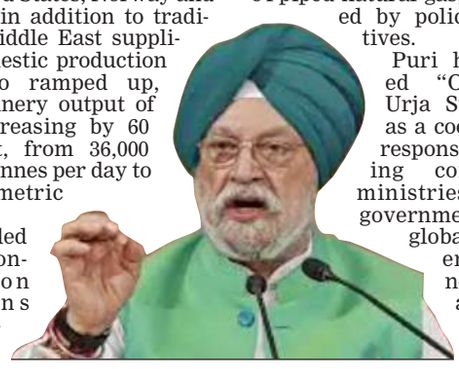
'India got crude from 41 nations amid energy crisis'

SURAT, 2 MAY

India expanded its crude oil sourcing base from 27 to 41 countries during the global energy crisis, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Friday, highlighting efforts to strengthen energy security.

Speaking at the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference in South Gujarat, Puri said the government cushioned consumers by absorbing the shock at the fiscal level rather than passing on the full impact of rising prices. He credited long-term planning over the past decade for enabling a timely and effective response.

The minister noted that sourcing diversification included procuring LPG from the United States, Norway and Algeria, in addition to traditional Middle East suppliers. Domestic production was also ramped up, with refinery output of LPG increasing by 60 per cent, from 36,000 metric tonnes per day to 54,000 metric tonnes.



He added that consumption patterns are shifting, with total daily LPG consumption of about 90,000 metric tonnes declining as households transition towards LNG, orpiped natural gas, supported by policy incentives.

Puri highlighted "Operation Urja Suraksha" as a coordinated response involving companies, ministries, state governments and global suppliers. He noted that a significant share of LPG shipments transited through the Strait of Hormuz during the crisis.

To shield consumers, oil marketing companies absorbed under-recoveries, while excise duties were cut and export levies imposed to retain fuel within domestic markets. As of late April, petrol in Delhi was priced at Rs 94.77 per litre and diesel at Rs 87.67.

He added that supplies were prioritised to ensure uninterrupted cooking fuel for 33 crore households, while commercial LPG prices have fallen to about 70 per cent of pre-crisis levels, supporting key industries. —PTI

RBI Guv calls for efficient financial markets amid global headwinds

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

India's financial markets have shown strong resilience amid global uncertainty, but future growth will depend on deeper liquidity, wider participation and stronger infrastructure, Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra said.

Delivering the keynote address at the 25th FIMMDA-PDAI Annual Conference in Amsterdam, Malhotra said the Indian economy remains among the fastest-growing major economies, supported by robust macro fundamentals, structural reforms and prudent policies. Growth averaged 8.2 per cent during 2021–25, with 7.6 per cent estimated for 2025–26 and 6.9 per cent projected for 2026–27.

Inflation has largely stayed within the RBI's tolerance band, with CPI projected at 4.6 per cent for FY27. Fiscal consolidation is progressing, aided by improved tax buoyancy and better expenditure quality. Banking and NBFC balance sheets have strengthened, while corporate bond issuances have diversified funding sources.

Foreign exchange reserves cover 11 months of imports, and gross FDI is expected to reach about USD 90 billion in 2025–26.

Malhotra outlined measures to improve market efficiency, including an agile liquidity framework, expanded benchmark issuance for State Development Loans, and new tools such as total return swaps and derivatives on corporate bond indices.

Infrastructure reforms include expanded central clearing for FX forwards, electronic trading platforms, and enhanced transparency through mandatory reporting.

He identified key gaps, including improving G-sec liquidity, expanding derivatives markets, and strengthening India's role in global INR markets, while stressing the responsibility of banks to ensure fair and inclusive market access. —ANI

RISING COMPETITION

Q-com enters 'survival of fittest' phase: Report

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

India's quick commerce sector is entering a consolidation phase, with companies expected to shift from aggressive expansion to profitability amid rising competition and capital intensity, according to a report by Investec.

The brokerage said rapid growth has attracted multiple players, including traditional e-commerce platforms and large-format retailers, but sustaining momentum will require sharper focus on unit economics and margins. The segment is projected to grow at over 40 per cent during FY26–30, even as competitive pressures intensify.

However, Investec cautioned that the current expansion phase—marked by pricing pressures and extensive network buildouts—may not be sustainable. Leading players are likely to prioritise profitability over the next two years.

Describing the sector as entering a "survival of the fittest" phase, the report said scale, execution and operational efficiency will determine long-term winners. The entry of major players such as Flipkart, Amazon and BigBasket is expanding the market, boosting consumer awareness and deepening penetration, while also intensifying competition.

- The entry of major players such as Flipkart, Amazon and BigBasket is expanding the market, boosting consumer awareness.

Companies are rapidly scaling infrastructure, particularly dark store networks, to enhance delivery speed and customer experience. At the same time, they continue to invest heavily in customer acquisition through marketing and promotions.

Looking ahead, Investec said the sector is likely to follow global trends, where consolidation and profitability become central. It expects the next phase to be driven by higher basket sizes, improved monetisation and stronger unit economics, underscoring that long-term success will depend on disciplined execution and sustainable growth. —PTI

Rs 3.53L cr MoUs inked in Vibrant Gujarat event

SURAT, 2 MAY

The Gujarat government has signed 2,792 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 3.53 lakh crore during the two-day Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference in Surat, with projects expected to generate 2.82 lakh direct jobs, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi said.

Addressing the valedictory session, Sanghavi said the investments will be implemented over the next three years, creating large-scale employment opportunities. He noted that similar regional conferences were earlier held in Mehsana and Rajkot, as part of efforts to expand the Vibrant Gujarat initiative beyond Gandhinagar.

The move aims to give small businesses direct access to global opportunities. Participants from South Gujarat interacted with representatives from 20 countries, including the US, Canada, Singapore, Japan and Rwanda.

Sanghavi said the initiative focuses on supporting smaller entrepreneurs, not just established players, and ensuring wider access to global markets. He added that the government will hold open-door meetings to address industry concerns and improve responsiveness. —PTI

'INDIA'S FOOD DELIVERY SECTOR TO SEE DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH'

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

India's online food delivery market is set for sustained double-digit growth, driven by rising order frequency, expanding Tier-2 penetration and steady increases in average order value (AOV), according to a report by Investec Equities.

The market is projected to grow from USD 9.1 billion in 2024 to nearly USD 27 billion by 2030, at a 19 per cent CAGR, supported by digital adoption and urbanisation. The broader food services industry has expanded from Rs 4 trillion in FY20 to Rs 7 trillion in FY25 and is expected to reach Rs 11–12 trillion by FY30. However, penetration remains low at 13 per cent of total food consumption, compared with 58–62 per cent in the US and 42–46 per cent in China.

Structural shifts such as smaller households, longer working hours and migration are increasing demand for eating out and ordering in. The organised segment's share has risen to 47–52 per cent in FY25 and is expected to reach 60–65 per cent by FY30. Online delivery, the fastest-growing segment, has expanded from Rs 270 billion in FY20 to Rs 790 billion in FY25 and could reach Rs 1.7–2.2 trillion by FY30. Growth is supported by convenience, smartphone usage and logistics. —ANI

AI spending surge squeezes tech giants, boosts chip makers: Jefferies

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The surge in AI infrastructure spending by US hyperscalers is placing significant strain on cash flows, with capital expenditure set to consume nearly all operating cash flow, even as DRAM makers gain strong pricing power, according to a Jefferies report.

The brokerage estimates that four major US hyperscalers will spend about 92 per cent of operating cash flow on capex in 2026, up sharply from 41 per cent in 2023. Total capex by leading US technology firms is projected at USD 700 billion this year and USD 800 billion next year—equivalent to 2 per cent of US GDP and 20 per cent of non-residential fixed investment, and nearly 30 per cent of non-financial pre-tax profits.

A substantial share is directed towards memory chips, with hyperscalers expected to allocate 28 per cent of operating cash flow to DRAM, assuming memory accounts for 30 per cent of total capex.

Supply constraints are intensifying as Moore's Law slows and the number of global DRAM suppliers has shrunk to three from 12 before 2012. This has led companies to secure long-term supply agreements, shifting the industry towards a demand-linked model. Jefferies cautioned that risks remain, particularly if hyperscalers or investors reassess potential overinvestment in AI. —ANI

AMID IRAN WAR

China's AI models challenge US dominance

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

China is rapidly emerging as a major force in artificial intelligence services, with its open-source models now processing token volumes comparable to US counterparts, even as Europe faces mounting economic and geopolitical strain from the ongoing US-Iran conflict, a report by Jefferies said.

Data from OpenRouter showed China's top nine AI models processed 4.37 trillion tokens in the week ended April 26, close to the US total of 4.98 trillion. Earlier, in the week ended April 5, Chinese models processed a record 12.96 trillion tokens, far exceeding the US figure of 3.03 trillion. The trend underscores China's ability to leverage low-cost energy and computing power to expand exports of digitally delivered knowledge services.

China ranked as the world's sixth-largest exporter of such services in 2025, with exports rising at an annualised 15.2 per cent over two decades to USD 245 billion, up from USD 14.4 billion in 2005. While still below India's USD 328 billion, the growth signals a shift beyond manufacturing-led exports.

In Europe, tensions over the US-Iran conflict are intensifying. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz criticised Washington's strategy, calling it unconvincing. Germany's GfK consumer climate index fell sharply to minus 33.3 in May, its lowest since February 2023.

European leaders are also questioning reliance on US military presence and considering direct engagement with Iran to secure access to the Strait of Hormuz.

In the US, public disapproval of military and economic policy is rising, while the UAE's exit from OPEC signals growing fractures within the Gulf. —ANI

Manas Dhamne makes maiden ATP Challenger final

SHYMKENT, 2 MAY

India's rising tennis talent Manas Dhamne scripted a breakthrough run by storming into his maiden ATP Challenger final with a straight-sets win over France's Antoine Ghibaudo in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Saturday. The 18-year-old Indian produced a composed and aggressive display to pip Ghibaudo 6-4, 6-3 in the semifinals of the clay court tournament. After edging a tight opening set with a late break, he raised his level in the second, dictating rallies from the baseline and closing out the contest without much trouble. The victory marks a significant milestone in Dhamne's young career, making him one of the few Indian teenagers to reach an ATP Challenger final.—*PTI*

Women's AC: India suffers 0-2 defeat against Australia

SUZHOU, 2 MAY

India went down fighting 0-2 against formidable Australia in their opening group match of the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup football tournament here on Saturday. Theodora Mouithys put Australia ahead in the 25th minute before Indian defender Abhista Basnett scored an own goal in the 59th minute in the opening Group B match. India face four-time champions Japan on May 5 before taking on Lebanon on 8 May. It was India's first appearance at the U17 Women's Asian Cup since 2005, marking the end of a 21-year wait at this level. Australia are one of the established football countries in Asia and they have reached the semifinals of the tournament on two earlier occasions.—*PTI*

Alex, an auto racing champion, passes away at 59

ROME, 2 MAY

Alex Zanardi, the Italian auto racing champion-turned-Paralympic gold medalist whose career was marked by two life-altering accidents, has died. He was 59. Zanardi's family announced his death on Saturday, saying that he passed away on Friday night. "Alex died peacefully, surrounded by the affection of those closest to him," the family said in a statement without providing a cause of death. In 2020, Zanardi was seriously injured in a handbike accident after crashing into an oncoming truck during a relay event in Tuscany. Zanardi suffered serious facial and cranial trauma in the crash and was put in a medically induced coma.—*PTI*

-PTI

Lando Norris wins pole for the Miami GP sprint race

MIAMI GARDENS, 2 MAY

Reigning Formula 1 champion Lando Norris won the pole for Saturday's sprint race at the Miami Grand Prix, beating current F1 points leader Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes. Norris' McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri was third, only 0.017 seconds behind Antonelli, ahead of the second sprint race of the season. Friday was the first time drivers were able to test changes made by FIA, the sports governing body, during a five-week hiatus. The organization implemented changes to the regulations after drivers heavily criticized how the electrical battery power has changed the cars and competition. "It was great," Norris said. "Perfect result for us, nice way to reward the team.—*PTI*

SRH look to continue winning run against KKR

Kolkata placed eighth in the 10-team tournament

HYDERABAD, 2 MAY

SRH players look at the screen during TATA Indian Premier League 2026 -*IPL*

A power-packed batting unit at their disposal, Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to continue their winning streak and climb up the ladder when they take on a resurgent Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Sunday.

SRH are on a five-match winning streak and are placed third in the IPL standings with 12 points from nine matches, which includes six wins and three defeats.

KKR, on the other hand, has been struggling all season under Ajinkya Rahane's captaincy but has won its last two games. They are placed eighth in the 10-team tournament.

SRH boasts of a strong batting line-up in the form of the tournament's second and third highest run-scorers in Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen.

In Ishan Kishan, SRH has an explosive batter who can change the complexion of the match on any given day, and he has proved that this season.

Australian opener Travis Head also got back among runs with 76 against the Mumbai Indians in SRH's last match while chasing an imposing 243 for 5 with six wickets in hand in 18.4 overs.

Nitish Kumar Reddy and Salil Arora have also risen to the occasion with the bat for SRH when called for.

Considering the firepower of SRH's batting unit, KKR's bowling department will have to raise its standards by leaps and bounds to contain their opponents.

On the bowling front, SRH have been boosted by the return of their skipper Pat Cummins.

Besides Cummins, Praful Hinge, Eshan Malinga, Reddy, and Sakib Hussain have also been playing their part.

SRH would also be high on confidence, having defeated KKR by 65 runs at the Eden Gardens in the first leg.

It promises to be an exciting contest as KKR are on a comeback trail with consecutive wins after five losses, and one washed-out match.

KKR's bold decision to continue with Rahane as the captain after a woeful IPL 2025 campaign has been the talk of the town, as the right-hander has so far failed to inspire his side. —*PTI*

SRH VS KKR @ Hyderabad Stadium
Match starts at
3.30 pm IST

Connolly's enjoys a debut fifty against Gujarat Titans -*PTI*

PBKS look to bounce back, GT target 3rd straight win

AHMEDABAD, 2 MAY

Their perfect run finally halted, Punjab Kings will look to ensure the slip does not turn into a slide when they take on Gujarat Titans, who will be targeting a third straight win, in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

The Kings were handed a bitter first defeat of the season by the Rajasthan Royals earlier this week. Although Punjab Kings continue to lead the standings with 13 points from eight games, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Sunrisers Hyderabad, and Rajasthan Royals are just a point behind them. For a side that had set the early pace with six wins on the trot, the loss has brought a few concerns, especially with the ball. Punjab's bowling has not quite matched the consistency of their batting. In fact, their strong batting displays have often masked the shortcomings of the bowling unit.

Even in victories, Punjab's bowlers have allowed opposition teams to score freely at stages, and the recent loss once again exposed those issues. Their inability to close out innings has put added pressure on the batters, who have often had to chase bigger targets or set above-par totals. With the tournament entering a more competitive phase, Punjab will need sharper execution and clearer plans, particularly against a Gujarat top order that thrives on momentum. —*PTI*

PBKS VS GT @ Ahmedabad Stadium
Match starts at
7.30 pm IST

I enjoy being a finisher for my team: Ashutosh Sharma

Delhi Capitals batting all-rounder Ashutosh Sharma said he relishes his role as a finisher after his side snapped a three-match losing streak with a seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match here.

Ashutosh struck an unbeaten 25 off 15 balls, hitting four boundaries, as Delhi successfully chased down a daunting 226-run target with five balls to spare on Friday.

"I enjoy being a finisher for my team. The team has trusted me to bat in these situations, and I enjoy playing in these moments. I always feel that as long as I am at the crease, I can win the game for my team," Ashutosh said at the post-match press conference.

Chasing a stiff total, Delhi laid a solid foundation by KL Rahul and Pathum Nissanka, who stitched together a 110-run opening partnership.

"In T20 cricket nowadays.

Kyle breaks silence on Vaibhav duel: 'never been so afraid'

As the Delhi Capitals looked to revive their campaign in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 match against the Rajasthan Royals, the biggest threat that stood in front of them was 15-year-old prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

Fortunately for the Capitals, Kyle Jamieson struck early to remove Sooryavanshi, but what followed was an aggressive act of celebration that even saw the Kiwi pacer being reprimanded by the IPL Governing Council. After the match, Jamieson opened up on his duel with Sooryavanshi, saying he has never been as afraid of a 15-year-old kid as he was against the Rajasthan Royals teenager. It was a yorker from Jamieson that ended Sooryavanshi's stay in the middle prematurely. His dismissal gave DC a strong foundation to build on, though the likes of Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, and Donovan Ferreira fought back to take the team's total to 225 runs.

40 boxers left out of SAI sanction

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

As many as 40 boxers face uncertainty after being omitted from the sanction letter issued by the Sports Authority of India for the national camp, casting doubt on their participation in the selection assessment process for this year's Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

According to the selection policy of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), the top two finishers across 20 weight categories, 10 each in men's and women's sections at the Chief of Army Staff Cup (COAS), held from March 30 to April 5, were to be included in the national camp that was scheduled to begin on April 25.

The policy, released in December last year, states that these 40 boxers would be eligible for the assessment trials, which will determine India's squads for the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, and the World Boxing Cup 2.

However, the sanction letter received by the BFI on April 29 did not include the names of these boxers.

"The sanction was received on 29th April 2026, and 40 names are currently missing from the list," the federation said in a notification on Friday. It is understood that the BFI has been in constant communication with SAI to resolve the issue, but has yet to receive a response.

The assessment process, originally scheduled to begin on May 5, has now been pushed back by a day and will commence on May 6 due to the uncertainty surrounding the missing names. —*PTI*

NANDINI GETS MAIDEN CALL

India squad for Women's T20 WC: Harmanpreet Kaur to lead

MUMBAI, 2 MAY

India on Saturday drafted in uncapped Nandini Sharma and wicketkeeper batter Yastika Bhatia in the 15-player squad for the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup, beginning June 12 in England and Wales.

Pratika Rawal was excluded, and all-rounder Amanjot Kaur missed out on selection owing to injury. Harmanpreet Kaur will lead all the squads with Smriti Mandhana being her deputy. Pratika, however, has been in the squad for the one-off Test against England to be played at Lord's between July 10 and 13.

Nandini Sharma, who has received her maiden call-up. Nandini is a medium pacer who played 10 matches for Delhi Capitals in the Women's Premier League. She has 17 wickets from ten matches. She was also part of the India squad that played in the Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars tournament in Bangkok in February this year. The squad picked for the World Cup will also compete in the preceding three-match T20I series against hosts England, starting 28 May.

Nandini Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur -*PTI*

India squad for England T20Is and T20 World Cup

Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali, Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Bharti Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wk), Sree Charani, Yastika Bhatia (2nd wk), Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav. —*PTI*

Lakshya Sen misses SF vs France due to swollen elbow

HORSENS, 2 MAY

A swollen right elbow has ruled out Lakshya Sen from India's Thomas Cup semifinal clash against France on Saturday night, and world No. 30 Kidambi Shrikant will compete in his absence.

The 24-year-old Lakshya had saved two match points to script an 18-21, 22-20, 21-17 victory over world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen in a marathon clash lasting one hour and 28 minutes, helping India notch up a commanding 3-0 win over Chinese Taipei in the quarterfinals on Friday.

India is assured of a medal after reaching the semifinals.

The country had won the Thomas Cup in 2022 and claimed bronze medals in 1952, 1955, and 1979.

However, the Commonwealth Games champion hurt his elbow while diving for a shot during an intense rally.

"He is currently under close medical observation and receiving all necessary support.

The team remains confident and optimistic about his swift recovery and return to peak form." —*PTI*

Madrid Open 2026: Zverev set up final against Jannik Sinner

MADRID, 2 MAY

World No. 3 Alexander Zverev, in strong form, dispatched promising Belgian Alexander Blockx 6-2, 7-5 to set up a summit clash against World No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the Madrid Open on Friday night. "I'm very happy, of course, to be in a final," said Zverev, who lifted the trophy in Madrid in 2018 and 2021. There were a lot of tough matches, a lot of tough battles... and I'm looking forward to playing Jannik again.

"Tennis is very, very easy for him right now, the way he is playing. Maybe on Sunday, I will make it a bit more difficult for him.

"He's the best player in the world for sure, and I'm just trying to give him a tough battle." The 29-year-old broke in the first and fifth games to surge into a 5-1 lead against his unseeded opponent.

Underdog Blockx, ranked 69th in the world, resisted strong pressure on his next service game, saving three set points to hold.

However, the dominant Zverev made no mistake with his fourth chance to wrap up the fourth stanza, laying down an ace.

Blockx survived two break points in the first game of the second set, and another in the third as Zverev worked him hard.

The Belgian, who defeated Casper Ruud in the quarterfinals, put up a brave display as he saved two more break points in each of the seventh and ninth games. Eventually, Zverev took his eighth break point of the second set to nose 6-5 ahead, with a fortuitous net cord that broke Blockx's resistance.—*PTI*

CURRENT DOPING ISSUES

Indian athletes running away when there's a doping control: Cohen

NEW YORK, 2 MAY

REPRESENTATION IMAGE

The head of the International Testing Agency (ITA), the body that manages the anti-doping programme in Olympic Games and other major global events, has expressed concern at the high rate of doping cases in India and athletes getting "advance notice before testing" and avoiding furnishing samples if there is doping control.

ITA Director General Benjamin Cohen said in a report that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has conveyed that if India wants to host the 2036 Games, the country needs to undergo "a lot of governance and structural reforms".

"We're concerned in general with the state of doping in India, and we're hearing a lot of things happening on the ground," Cohen was quoted as saying by 'The Athletic', which covers sports for 'The New York Times'.

"We also hear stories of athletes running away when there is a doping control, and we hear of advance notice (given to athletes before testing)." Besides overseeing anti-doping tests on behalf of the IOC, the Lausanne-based ITA also manages the anti-doping programme of around 50 international sports federations.

Benjamin Cohen said he met with the officials of the New Delhi-based National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) at the recent Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina, Italy, and he was warned by their apparent willingness to "team up with the ITA". But, he also admitted that getting India to join forces with ITA won't be an easy task, as that could be perceived (by India) as an admission of failure of its

(anti-doping) system.

"I'm going to be frank: there is still some resistance to engage with the ITA, as there can be a perception in India that this is almost an admission of failure of the system, or that they're not going to be seen as competent enough to deal with their own problems, so they have to join forces with an independent international organisation.

"There's a bit of scepticism as to how it's going to be perceived in the Indian community. But I think they (India) are on the right track, as it is now known that the IOA and the Ministry of Sports want to do something: they want to invest. They have the resources, so I think it's just a matter of time," he said.

The ITA works with an increasing number of National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs) around the world to exchange intelligence and information. —*PTI*